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THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE" "THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND "THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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Power for Witness.

Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses.—Acts i. 8.

1. The Book of Acts takes up the thread of the story just before the point at which the Gospel had dropped it. It begins with a brief summary of the Forty Days, adding a fuller account of the Ascension. These introductory verses (i. 1–12) mark the transition from the earthly Ministry of the Lord ("all that Jesus began both to do and to teach") to the Ministry of the Spirit which was to follow His Ascension. The earthly Ministry had been from the first in the power of the Spirit, as the Gospel has taught us; and the Acts opens with an intimation that this continued to the end. The last injunctions to the Apostles were given, it is noted, "through [the] Holy Spirit." The Messianic inspiration was upon the Risen Christ as it had been upon the Christ of the Ministry, and was perhaps enhanced by the more spiritual conditions of the Resurrection life.

2. In these interviews before the Ascension the Lord's mind seems to have recalled the days of His own Baptism and Anointing by the Holy Spirit. He knew that a like event was about to occur in the history of the Church; her baptism with the Spirit was at hand. The Eleven were charged not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the fulfilment of the Father's promise; "for John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized in [the] Holy Spirit not many days hence." As to the time of the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom He had nothing to say; it was in the Father's hands. It was enough for them to know what directly concerned their own immediate future, and the discharge of their duty in it. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the end of the earth." As the Lord's own Baptism had been followed by His

ministry in Galilee, so the Baptism of the Church was to be preparatory to a world-wide ministry; a ministry not, like His own, creative of a new order, but one of simple testimony; yet to be fulfilled only in the power of the Spirit of God.[1]

The text contains three clauses: (1) Ye shall receive power, (2) when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and (3) ye shall be my witnesses. These clauses suggest three divisions under which we may study the subject—

I. Power.
II. The Source of Power.
III. The Use of Power.

I.

Power.

"Ye shall receive power."

There are two Greek words (ἐξουσία and δύναμις) in the New Testament, both of which are rendered by our word "power." The one refers to power in the sense of rule or authority, the other means ability, strength, or force. It is the latter of these two words that is used here.

What was this "power" which the Apostles were to receive? As a matter of fact, what power did they receive?

1. Was it, as they anticipated, *political power*? Certainly, in the course of years the Church of Christ did acquire something very like the power of the sceptre. The prophecies of Isaiah seemed to intimate that this would be so: in the Evangelical prophet the Church is already represented as a spiritual empire, surrounded with the circumstances of temporal greatness. But when did this form of power present itself? Not in her first years of missionary enterprise and of abundant martyrdom. But when she was no longer composed of a despised minority, when by a long catalogue of labours and sufferings she had won her way to the understandings and to the hearts of multitudes, she forthwith acquired power in the State. Found in all the walks of

[1] H. B. Swete.

life, in all the provinces of the great world-empire, and in regions beyond its frontiers; an intellectual force, when other thought was languishing or dying; a focus of high moral effort, when the world around was a very flood of revolting wickedness; a bond of the closest union, when all else was tending to social divergence and disruption of interests; she became a political force. Such she was long before Constantine associated the Cross with the Roman purple. Political power came to the Church, at first unbidden, and in many cases unwelcomed. It was a current charge against the primitive Christians that they neglected civil and political duties. But political power came to them from the nature of the case, and inevitably: the Gospel was necessarily a popular moral influence, and it could not be this on a great scale without tending to become a power in the State.

¶ Undoubtedly political power was given to the Church by the loving providence of our Lord, as an instrument whereby to promote man's highest good. But if such power was an opportunity often used for the highest purposes and with the happiest effect, it was also a temptation to worldly ambition, and even to worse sins, often yielded to with the most disastrous results. Who can doubt this after studying in the history of the great Western See such lives as, for example, those of a Julius II. or of a Leo X.? Who can doubt this after an impartial consideration of the history of other portions of the Church nearer home, which have purchased a political status at the heavy cost of sacrificing spiritual energy and freedom? He who said at the first, "My kingdom is not of this world," is perhaps bringing Christians everywhere back by the course of His providences to the fuller acknowledgment of this primal truth. If political power had been of the essence of our Lord's promise to His Apostles, we might well lose heart; but there is no cause for despondency, if the power which the Apostles were to receive was of a higher and more enduring character. Political power is after all but a clumsy instrument for achieving spiritual success.[1]

2. Was, then, the power in question *intellectual power*? The Gospel has undoubtedly lightened up man's understanding and fertilized his thought. Knowledge is of itself power; and knowledge on the highest and most interesting of all subjects is a very high form of power. For knowledge is the motive and warrant of action, and they whose eye ranges over two worlds occupy a more

[1] H. P. Liddon.

commanding position than they who see only one. A certain power of this description was undoubtedly a result of the gift of Pentecost. Our Lord had dwelt on the illuminating office of the Comforter: "He shall guide you into all truth." And the first Apostles needed such an assistance, since they were utterly uneducated men, with the narrowest of mental horizons. How wonderfully, on the day of Pentecost itself, is the thought of St. Peter fertilized and expanded! The unlettered fisherman is suddenly the profound expositor of ancient prophecy, and within a short period his teaching brings him into collision with the Sadducean leaders of educated sceptical opinion. And in later years how rich and various are the intellectual gifts of the inspired Apostles of Christ! And when we pass down into later ages, we find the promise of intellectual power fulfilled almost continuously in the annals of the Church. But was this intellectual power, swaying the thoughts of educated men, the chief, or even a main, element of the promised gift? Surely not. The Gospel was meant for the whole human family; and the poor, in consideration of the hardness of their lot, had a first claim upon its preachers. Not many learned were called among the multitudes who first poured into the kingdom; and mere cultivated intellect is a sorry weapon wherewith to approach those who lack that cultivation which is necessary to understand it. The gift of Pentecost may indeed have included intellectual power; a living, active soul is a thinking as well as a loving soul; but the main essential gift itself was something beyond, something higher, something more universally acceptable, something more adapted to the soul of man, as man, something more capable of advancing the glory and of doing justice to the grace of God.

¶ There is in our day a marvellous idolatry of talent; it is a strange and a grievous thing to see how men bow down before genius and success. Draw the distinction sharp and firm between these two things—*goodness* is one thing, *talent* another. The Son of Man came, not as a scribe, but as a poor working man. He was a Teacher, but not a Rabbi. When once the idolatry of talent enters the Church then farewell to spirituality; when men ask their teachers not for that which will make them more humble and godlike, but for the excitement of an intellectual banquet, then farewell to Christian progress.[1]

[1] F. W. Robertson.

3. Was this power, then, to be *a faculty of working miracles*? Our thoughts seem to gravitate naturally towards such a supposition. A certain limited power of this description, varying apparently with the spiritual state of the disciples themselves, had been granted to them during our Lord's ministry. At one time the disciples rejoice that the devils are subject to them; at another they are powerless to relieve the lunatic at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. But after the Ascension, and because of it, they were to do works even greater than those of their Divine Master. "Greater works than these shall he (that believeth) do, because I go to my Father." The gift of miracles depended on the Ascension in the same sense as did the gift of the promised Comforter; and it was natural to identify the two gifts, or to regard the former as a chief result or fruit of the latter. But miracle was not of the essence of that power which the Apostles were to receive at Pentecost. It was rather an evidence, an occasional accompaniment, an ornament of the central gift, than the gift itself.

¶ Miracle is by no means a resistless instrument for propagating a doctrine. Unbelief has many methods for escaping its force. Where it cannot insinuate trickery, it has no scruple about hinting at the agency of Beelzebub. The state of mind which resists the historical and prophetical evidences of Revelation is likely to deal somewhat summarily with a natural wonder, however well attested, in the domain of sense. Our Lord Himself tells us that this is so: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

4. Nor did the power consist in the *ministerial commission* itself: in the authorization to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments. Undoubtedly, in a profound sense of the term, that commission, with its several elementary portions, is a power unlike any other which God has given to His creatures here below. But our Lord had already solemnly and fully commissioned His Apostles. They were in full possession of all powers necessary to feed and teach the Lord's people, but it would seem that until the Day of Pentecost these powers were like undeveloped faculties, latent in the souls of the Apostles, but unexercised. Something else was needed, some vivifying heavenly force which should quicken and stimulate these hidden

energies, and, like the rain or the sunshine upon the dormant vitality of the seed or the shoot, should provoke them into an outburst of energetic life.

5. Wherein did this power which the Apostles were to receive consist? Creating political ascendancy, yet utterly distinct from it; fertilizing intellectual power, yet differing in its essence from the activity of mere vigorous unsanctified intellect; working moral miracles, gifted (it may be) to work physical wonders, yet certainly in itself more persuasive than the miracle it was empowered to produce; intimately allied with, and the natural accompaniment of, distinct ministerial faculties, yet not necessarily so; what is this higher, this highest power, this gift of gifts, this transforming influence, which was to countersign as if from heaven what had previously been given by the Incarnate Lord on earth, and was to form out of unlettered and irresolute peasants the evangelists of the world? It was *spiritual*, it was *personal*, it was *moral* power.

¶ Spiritual power may be felt rather than described or analysed. It resides in or it permeates a man's whole circle of activities; it cannot be localized, it cannot be identified exclusively with one of them. It is an unearthly beauty, whose native home is in a higher world, yet which tarries among men from age to age, since the time when the Son of God left us His example, and gave us His Spirit. It is nothing else than His spiritual presence, mantling upon His servants; they live in Him; they lose in Him something of their proper personality; they are absorbed into, they are transfigured by, a Life altogether higher than their own; His voice blends with theirs, His eye seems to lighten theirs with its sweetness and its penetration; His hand gives gentleness and decision to their acts; His heart communicates a ray of its Divine charity to their life of narrower and more stagnant affection; His soul commingles with theirs, and their life of thought, and feeling, and resolve is irradiated and braced by His. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."[1]

¶ Suppose we saw an army sitting down before a granite fort, and they told us that they intended to batter it down; we might ask them, "How?" They point to a cannon-ball. Well, there

[1] H. P. Liddon.

is no power in that; it is heavy, but not more than half a hundred-, or perhaps a hundred-weight; if all the men in the army hurled it against the fort, they would make no impression. They say, "No; but look at the cannon." Well, there is no power in that. A child may ride upon it, a bird may perch in its mouth; it is a machine, and nothing more. "But look at the powder." Well, there is no power in that; a child may spill it, a sparrow may peck it. Yet this powerless powder, and powerless ball, are put into the powerless cannon, *one spark of fire enters it*, and then, in the twinkling of an eye, that powder is a flash of lightning, and that ball a thunderbolt which smites as if it had been sent from heaven. So is it with our Church machinery at this day: we have all the instruments necessary for pulling down strongholds, and O for the baptism of fire![1]

II.

The Source of Power.

"When the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

1. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The power is not only coincident in time with the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, it is derived from it. The literal translation is, "Ye shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you." The connexion between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the power may be seen from Christ's treatment of His Apostles. They had been with Him in His work, had seen His miracles, had heard His addresses, had been taught by Him in private for years, had seen Him in His passion, death, and resurrection, and were yet to witness His ascension; but they were told to tarry for this enduement. Theirs was a task for which they seemed well equipped. As eye and ear witnesses, it was theirs to go out and tell the things that they had seen and heard; yet they were not allowed to do so without this last all-important equipment.

¶ There is one inlet of power in the life,—anybody's life—any kind of power, just one inlet,—the Holy Spirit. He is power. He is in every one who opens his door to God. He eagerly enters every open door. He comes in by our invitation and consent. His presence within is the vital thing.[2]

[1] W. Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire*, 309.

[2] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 9.

¶ On one occasion it was our lot to hear a preacher of name, preaching before a great Missionary Society, from the text, "I am come to send fire upon the earth." Choosing to interpret the fire referred to in this passage as the power which would purify and renew the earth, he at once declared the *truth* to be that power, and most consistently pursued his theme, without ever glancing at anything but the instrument. Afterwards, hearing the merits of the sermon discussed by some eminent ministers of his own denomination, and finding no allusion to its theology, we asked, "Did you not remark any theological defect?" No one remarked any, till the minister of some obscure country congregation broke silence, for the first time, by saying, "Yes; there was not one word in it about the Holy Spirit."[1]

2. Why do I believe in the power of the Holy Ghost? First, because it is clearly promised me by God. God, who never fails His people, has promised power. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." When Jesus Christ went away, He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." What was the Comforter to do when He came? "Tarry ye in Jerusalem till ye be clothed with power from on high. When the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye shall receive power." Could the Word of God be more clearly pledged to anything than this—that the Holy Ghost shall give us power? Next, let us look to see whether this promise was fulfilled to the first disciples. We see a body of men—not only Apostles, but all the first disciples, men and women just like ourselves—tarrying in Jerusalem, gathered together, weak, irresolute, timid, and perplexed. We hear the sound of a rushing mighty wind; we see tongues of fire coming down upon that body. What has happened? They have received the Spirit of power. Those timid, irresolute fishermen and peasants are turned into the world's apostles. They always know henceforth the next thing to do; they face the world with courage and determination. Unknown, unnamed, they go out, a little body, full of the Holy Ghost, and they convert the world.

¶ "A servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John xiii. 16). The way in which the Master entered upon His ministry is the way in which

[1] W. Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire*, 171.

the Apostles are to enter upon theirs. We say it with head uncovered, as in the presence of the supreme mystery, Jesus Christ Himself did not begin His life task until He too had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Coming up out of the Jordan at His baptism He prayed; and as He prayed, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Then the record says: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit into the wilderness." And later, when His temptations were over, the Scripture says: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and He taught in their synagogues." Of Himself He said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach." And it was in this power, too, that He cast out devils and performed His many miracles. Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, very God of very God, prepared through eternity for His task, tarried as a man until the Spirit baptized Him and He could in this power perform His part in the Temple-building plans of the Trinity.[1]

3. How did the disciples receive the power of the Holy Ghost?

(1) First, they *waited* for it: "Tarry in Jerusalem, tarry till ye be clothed with power from on high." They did not force the hand of God, they did not get impatient, they waited—they waited upon God.

¶ When I find people giving up their prayers because they do not feel anything, when I find them disheartened because when they were confirmed they used to be full of warm aspirations, but now they have to go on their way feeling cold and dead, then I know that they have missed the first lesson. Wait for the power of the Holy Ghost. It is certain to come whether they feel it or not. It does not depend on feeling at all. If there is some one here tired, depressed about his spiritual life, let him tarry in Jerusalem; let him keep his head bowed between his knees as Elijah on the top of Carmel, and at last there will be borne on the breeze to his thirsty soul the sound of abundance of rain.[2]

¶ Some speak of waiting for salvation as if it meant making ourselves at ease, and dismissing both effort and anxiety. Who so waits for any person, or any event? When waiting, your mind is set on a certain point; you can give yourself to nothing else. You are looking forward, and preparing; every moment of delay increases the sensitiveness of your mind as to that one thing. A servant waiting for his master, a wife waiting for the footstep of her husband, a mother waiting for her expected boy,

[1] C. B. Keenleyside. [2] A. F. Winnington Ingram.

a merchant waiting for his richly laden ship, a sailor waiting for the sight of land, a monarch waiting for tidings of the battle: all these are cases wherein the mind is set on one object, and cannot easily give attention to another.[1]

We wait, O Lord, Thy power to know,
Before we forth to service go,
Or else we serve in vain.
We trust not human thought or might,
Our souls are helpless for the fight,
Until that power we gain.

In solemn tarriance we seek
The power that strengthens what is weak,
To overcoming zeal.
O Holy Ghost, equip us here;
With fire our waiting souls come near,
Thy mightiness to feel!—

The fire that cleanseth through and through,
Inspiring every nerve anew,
With energy Divine!
The fire that burns its conquering way
Within, without; and every day
Doth keep us wholly Thine.

So forth to conflict, cleansed and strong,
Baptized for war with godless wrong,
Now send us, God of Right!
Our ransomed lives for warfare take,
And all thou wouldst, our spirits make,
All holy in Thy sight!

(2) The disciples *prayed* for the power of the Holy Spirit. They did not merely wish vaguely for a little more spiritual power. That is not the way to get it. They prayed with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength. If power is to come at all, it is the most precious thing in the world, it is a thing for which to agonize in prayer. It is the violent who take the kingdom of God by force. Let us pray, then, with all our soul—let us pray in faith, and pray all together.

4. Now consider the power of the Holy Spirit as given to the

[1] W. Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire*, 24.

Church. There are three principles, which we should remember, incident upon the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church.

(1) *The gift is constant.* Because the Holy Spirit is the source of power, therefore the power which was thus to arrive on a specific occasion was not to be transitory or occasional. The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, shall "abide with you for ever." "I am with you alway"—in your making disciples, baptizing and teaching—"even unto the end of the world."

(2) *The gift is both individual and corporate.* All the announcements and instructions were delivered to the disciples as a corporate group; and were so received and acted upon. The disciples tarried in the city together, assembled in one place, and this is specified as characteristic among the circumstances under which the promise was fulfilled and applied: "They were all together in one place." In short, our Lord did not announce the Holy Spirit only as a guide for individual hearts, essential as this part of His office is, but also as the Giver of power for the corporate witness of the Church, and for its extension. He laid down the doctrine of a Church which as a whole should be guided in her missionary operations by God the Holy Ghost, while for the execution of the details of that task, her members, each in his own grade, should receive power from the same Spirit.

¶ Jesus Christ made men before He made the Church. Jesus created and concentrated strong, personal forces among His personal followers, before He gave to the disciples the cup of communion, and ordained them as His Apostles to gather congregations of believers in His name. In Christ's work the inspired personality came first, and afterwards the New Testament and the Church. A true communion, or saved society of men and women, was the end sought from the beginning by Him who came preaching the Gospel of the kingdom; but the method of Jesus was personal influence, and the inspiration of chosen personalities by His Spirit. The power of the Church consists in its fulness of personal forces. Your personal power for good may be multiplied many fold in the organized life of the Church; but personal powers are the vital units which, multiplied together, constitute that organic whole which is the living body of Christ.[1]

(3) *It is a gift once for all, and cannot be repeated.* On this day the promise was fulfilled, the Holy Ghost came, and the new

[1] Newman Smyth, *Christian Facts and Forces*, 163.

era was inaugurated. It was not a step which could be repeated. We talk of new Pentecosts, but it is an inaccurate phrase. The fact of Pentecost has taken place once for all, and we are here, not to wait for new Pentecosts, but to believe in the one which God established. We may drink, as individuals, of the stream then set flowing, or we may neglect it; but there can be no second stream. We may stir up, as a Church, the Spirit which all the Churches have received, but if we neglect it there is no new Pentecost. That the new era had been on that day inaugurated became instantly evident. The Apostles, who had been very slow to understand either the essence or the nature of Christ's work, or the current of God's purposes, immediately were found masters of the application of the Old Testament to every part of their duty, masters of Christ's system, laying down the principles of conversion, communion, discipline; even found full of insight into the meaning of God in history, and the scope of His future purpose. As scattered fragments of iron filings are instantly ranged in order and charged with force when a great magnet is brought over them, so the group of wavering adherents, of different temperaments and aims, became in a moment a coherent and disciplined band, instinct with the mind and the force of their ascended Master, by the power of that Holy Spirit whom He had said that He would send.

¶ In the Church there ever is, living as an actual fact, to be seen of men, the Christian life, *i.e.* a character seen in actual life and work, with marks clear and distinct—a character which appeals to all as the highest and noblest life that man can live. There it is with many features, infinite variety, yet one and the same through the ages, governed by the same dominant and deeply fixed principles which make it what it is. It is not an imagination, but a real thing, which we can trace back to the time of Christ, and which we can trace no further.[1]

III.

The Use of Power.

"Ye shall be my witnesses."

The expression which St. Luke represents our Lord as employing, simple as it is, is full of meaning. It has a history.

[1] M. B. Williamson.

In the second part of Isaiah, the prophet draws a magnificent picture of a great assize (Isa. xliii. 9 ff.; cf. xliv. 8 ff.). Jehovah puts Himself on His trial. His claims to sovereignty become the subject of a universal controversy. On the one side all the nations are assembled together; on the other, Israel, now chastened and restored—Jehovah's sons brought "from far and his daughters from the end of the earth." The nations are challenged to produce their witnesses and to sustain the pretensions of their gods. There is silence; the appeal is unanswered. Then Jehovah turns to Israel, who has known Him. "Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen. . . . Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God."

The great assize is now no longer a prophetic vision. Henceforth it is to be wrought out in the daily struggles and triumphs of the Christian Church. The supreme messenger of Jehovah is renewing the ancient challenge. Israel after the flesh by their rejection of Him has proved unworthy of the prerogative once theirs. They are no longer Jehovah's witnesses to the nations. They have rather passed over into the ranks of those who must receive the testimony of others. The Apostles, the representatives and prophets of the new Israel of God, are bidden to take up the abdicated office, and, themselves the first recipients of a final salvation, to be Jehovah's witnesses to all the world. Thus Christ's parting words seem to be designed to mark alike the continuity of revelation and the passing away of the old order.

¶ "Ye shall be my witnesses." Think of all that this word means. What is a witness? The light we need here is light that we have by our common use of the Anglicized form of this Greek word "martyr." "Ye shall be martyrs." I do not wish to suggest that Jesus meant necessarily that these men would all die for Him. We have come to use that word "martyr" as referring only to such as seal their testimony with their blood. I am not suggesting that we should abandon that particular use of the word, for it is a great and glorious use of the word to-day. The men who sealed their testimony with their blood were martyrs, but they were martyrs before they died. Smithfield's fires never made martyrs: they revealed martyrs. Persecution never makes a martyr: it finds him

out and wraps him in the glory of flame that we may see him for evermore.[1]

We must consider our Lord's words in both their narrower and their wider application: (i.) as they relate in an especial sense to the Apostles, and (ii.) as they relate to each individual member of the Church.

i. The Apostles as Witnesses.

1. *The charge expresses their Master's confidence in the Apostles* in terms which could hardly be broader or more trustful. "Ye shall be my witnesses," it runs—my witnesses here where you are known, and in neighbouring lands, and then everywhere unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Observe the phrase, "my witnesses," not merely witnesses unto Me, but witnesses chosen by Me to take My place, to represent Me when I am not there to represent Myself. The trust and confidence of our Lord is almost awful in its absolute reality. He left no building, no writing, no material relics worthy of mention. He borrowed a room in a friend's house for His Last Supper and for the meetings of His little company. He borrowed the outward rite of one of the great sacraments from natural religion and the other from common life. His own special prayer has many points of contact with forms that existed before it. The number of the Apostles was apparently suggested by that of the tribes of Israel. Beyond these main foundations He left little that was definite, though there were indications that other existing usages of the religious life around Him were approved by Him and stamped with His recommendation. He left it to His Apostles and their successors to combine and to develop these hints and beginnings and give them form and substance, but clearly under reservation that all such things should take a secondary place in His plan of salvation. Everything not specially ordered by Him in detail was clearly subject to a change in detail, and everything even when so ordered was subordinate to the supreme duty of bringing His Person and Life before the world. That was the great commission finally impressed on the Apostles. He did not obscure their duty to be ministers of His Word and Sacraments, to be preachers of

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

the Gospel, to be pastors of men, and to bring men to God. He had revealed all this in many ways, and set it forth in brilliant and definite outlines. But the dominant thought is surely the last: it is the duty of the Church above all things else, both in its ministers and in its members, to bear witness to Christ, His Person, His Love, His Presence. With this charge ringing in their ears, the Apostles set out to begin their work. We cannot doubt that it is to be the perpetually recurring keynote to which the whole music of the Church is to be attuned to the end.

2. *The Apostles are the links between Christ and Christendom.* All we know of Him is through the impression produced on them. The last year of His ministry was almost entirely devoted to their training. The medium is singularly colourless; of themselves personally, with the exception of St. Peter, we know next to nothing. The sons of Zebedee appear as zealous partisans, and interesting notices of the hesitating Thomas and the practical Philip are given several times in the Fourth Gospel; but otherwise they are but honoured names—their origin, their ministry, their martyrdoms, almost a blank. We must not look to them primarily as preachers, organizers, writers, but we must look to them rather in their character as witnesses.

¶ Dr. Frank Gunsaulus, of Chicago, has written in one of his books a sentence to this effect: "True statesmanship consists in discovering the way in which God is going and then moving things out of the way for Him." And I believe to-day that what we need supremely is to come to a re-discovery of the way in which God is going; and in order to do that I personally feel that there is nothing more valuable than that we should return to the sources, to the beginnings of things—not that all the methods of the Spirit were exhausted in the early days, but that in the record of what then happened we have clearly defined for us the line of the Spirit's operations and the direction of God.[1]

ii. The Witness of us all.

The duty of being witnesses to Christ is not laid on one order of men alone, it is laid upon all. Although unquestionably, in a special degree, the injunction may be held as addressed to the Apostles and to those who bear office in the Church, the humblest

[1] G. Campbell Morgan.

members are not excluded from its scope. Not only does the gifted and lamented Genevan professor, Gaston Frommel, say: "This declaration of our Lord established the true notion of the Christian ministry, lay as well as pastoral," but Canon Liddon is equally emphatic: "The Apostles standing before their departing Lord impersonate not merely the ministry, but the Church; and Jesus in His last words on earth speaks not merely to the clerical order, He bequeaths a legacy of glory and of suffering to the millions of Christendom: 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me.'"

¶ In some religious bodies it is deemed incumbent on every member to relate his own experiences. He is not admitted unless he bear testimony to the fact that he has given his heart to Christ, and opportunities are periodically allowed for him to renew his testimony, to express the pleasure with which he feels his faith to be growing, or the distress with which he feels it to be decaying. From such meetings many have gone strengthened and confirmed, more ready to do and to suffer for their Lord. Such meetings are not altogether in accord with the traditions of our Scottish piety; the reticence of the Scottish character shrinks from uttering in company the secrets of the innermost heart, a reticence so extreme and so perverted as in some districts to keep back from the Lord's Table the most devout and earnest Christians till old age has come upon them. We can all see that public confessions of faith and devotion may be worth little, may be the result of momentary emotion rather than of settled principle, but it may be questioned whether in Scotland we do not carry our concealment of religious feeling too far. To speak glibly on a subject may indicate only superficial acquaintance; never to speak about it at all is not an absolute assurance that the acquaintance is genuine and profound. It may be absurd and blameable to talk volubly of spiritual themes to which we are personally strangers, but to refrain from utterance is at times to suppress a truth which, if it had been allowed to grow, would have been of inestimable value in shaping our own lives and the lives of others round about us. The vain repetition of pious phrases may be easily learned by the shallow and the hypocritical, but the careful abstention from every phrase that is not wholly secular will not induce our companions to take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. The chief service which, two hundred years ago, Joseph Addison rendered to religion was not so much by his essays in deliberate defence of Christianity, as by the graceful satire with which "he fairly laughed men out of that false modesty which made them ashamed of owning themselves on the Christian side," *e.g.* one who was "long

suspected of being a little pious, though no man ever hid his vice with greater caution than he did his virtue"; another, the well-bred man who is obliged to "conceal any serious sentiment and appear a greater libertine than he is, that he may keep himself in countenance among the men of more"; another, the master of the house who is "so very modest a man that he has not the confidence to say grace at his own table." It is possible that the shafts of the gentle ridicule of Addison might find as suitable targets to-day as they did two hundred years ago.[1]

1. It is the privilege of each believer everywhere, in addition to the cleansing in the water of Baptism, to receive also such a baptism of the Holy Ghost as will endue and equip for service. Power in service, or in witnessing, comes, as we have seen, from the Holy Ghost. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses." The form in which the power shall manifest itself is not for us to decide. "The Spirit divideth to each one severally as he will." But of this we may be sure, that if we have allowed God to choose our work, the power or gift so bestowed will exactly match the task that is before us. If God has picked us out to bear burdens, hew wood or stone, act as overseers, or as skilled artificers, He will then likewise divide to each in baptizing with the Spirit just that power needful for the work required. As there are diversities of tasks, so there are diversities of gifts, but the one Spirit.

¶ However it was spoken, the word was spoken suitably in every case. It might be expository or controversial in its nature, it might be by exhortation or reproof, according as the case demanded. In Barnabas it was exhortation; in Paul, reproof; in Apollos, exposition; in Peter, controversy. In Paul, reproof at one time; and at another, controversy, and argument, and exposition. In Peter, exposition, and controversy, and argument, and appeal, alternately. The occasion shaped the demand made, and so the utterance. The power of the Spirit impelled these men to speak, but enabled them to speak suitably.[2]

¶ There has come to you some bit of a call to service, to teach a class, or to write a special letter, or speak a word, or take up something needing to be done. And you hesitate. You think that you cannot. You are not fit, you think; not qualified. The thing to do is to do it. If the call is clear, go ahead. Need is one of the strong calling voices of God. It is always safe to

[1] P. M'Adam Muir. [2] T. Adamson, *The Spirit of Power*, 41.

respond. Put *out* your foot in the answering swing, even though you cannot see clearly the place to put it *down*. God attends to that part. Power comes as we *go*.[1]

2. The witness must also be suitable to time and circumstances. It is now acknowledged that the twentieth-century Christian can think only the thought of the twentieth century; hence it is a delusion to think that we men of to-day can hold quite the same belief as the Christian of the first century or the Christian of the sixteenth century. Mr. A. J. Balfour has done good service in making it plain that Religious Knowledge is subject to the same change and development as all other knowledge. "The fact that theological thought follows the laws which govern the evolution of all other thought, that it changes from age to age, largely as regards the relative emphasis given to its various elements, not inconsiderably as regards the substance of those elements themselves, is a fact written legibly across the pages of ecclesiastical history." Bearing this truism in mind, we shall understand that the measure of the present vitality of our religion is its power to readjust its conceptions, and to readapt its institutions to their environment. The religious teacher of to-day must be ready to bring out of his treasury things new as well as old; he must never be weary of translating into the current idiom the thoughts of old, but he must also be ever ready to welcome the fresh voices of later wisdom. And while in no way disparaging the partial formulæ in which men of old expressed their faith, we must beware lest we regard our own view of truth as final.

¶ Matthew Arnold well expressed the modern spirit when he wrote: "An age which has its face towards the future, and in which men are full of plans for the welfare of the world, is not an age that has lost its faith. Its temper of mind is constructive; it is eager for new institutions, keen for new ideas, and has already a half-belief in a future in which all things will be new." With these hopeful words ringing in our ears, let us attempt to face the religious problems of the present age.[2]

Not clinging to some ancient saw;
Not master'd by some modern term;
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm:
And in its season bring the law.

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 37.

[2] G. F. Terry.

Meet is it Chances should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease:
We are all changed by still degrees,
All—but the basis of the soul.

3. The life of witnessing is not one of easy self-complacency, still less of morbid emotionalism, but of constant unobtrusive earnestness amid the commonplace work of the world. To witness truly we must be "doers of the word and not hearers only," we must live lustrous lives, we must be valiant for the truth and wrestle bravely with individual and national sin, we must strengthen the feeble knees and encourage fainting hearts.

¶ When some one asked Sir Joshua Reynolds how long it had taken him to paint a certain pi ture, he answered, "All my life." "If I omit one day's practice," Rubinstein is reported to have said, "I know it the next day, the critics know it the day after, and the public the day after that." If, then, it be true that—

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night;

how is it to be supposed that it can be otherwise with great Christians? Our Lord bids us "strive to enter in at the strait gate," literally, to agonize to do it; and St. Paul declares: "By the grace of God I am what I am," yet immediately adds, "and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all." So in this matter of witnessing he will succeed best who takes most pains.[1]

¶ The man who witnesses for the Master to-day has not to face outward danger or brave a martyr's death. But with the age of persecution the difficulties of the Christian life have not passed away. In maintaining in the unambitious routine of humble duties a spirit of Christian cheerfulness and contentment —in the constant reference to lofty ends amid lowly trials—there may be evinced faith as strong as that of the man who dies with the song of martyrdom on his lips. It is a great thing to love Christ so dearly as to be ready to die for Him: but it is often a thing not less great to be ready to live for Him. To do this effectively demands not a little effort on our part. Those who have the best right to speak have been unanimous in their

[1] W. A. N. Hall.

testimony that nothing really worthy of attainment in art, in science, or in the things of the spirit, is to be accomplished without effort.[1]

So he died for his faith. That is fine.
More than the most of us do.
But stay. Can you add to that line
That he *lived* for it, too?

It is easy to die. Men have died
For a wish or a whim—
From bravado or passion or pride.
Was it hard for him?

But to *live*: every day to live out
All the truth that he dreamt,
While his friends met his conduct with doubt,
And the world with contempt.

Was it thus that he plodded ahead,
Never turning aside?
Then we'll talk of the life that he led.
Never mind how he died.

4. Two things remain. In all witnessing it is essential (1) that the subject of the witness be Christ, and (2) that the witness be in the Holy Spirit.

(1) The subject of all our witness must be the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very last command of the Lord. He stands, as He utters it, with His feet upon the steps of the heavenly throne. As all through His earthly ministry, so now, almost from the place of bliss itself, "He commends Himself." He sends His followers out into the world on purpose, as their work of works, to bear a testimony. And that testimony is to be borne, first and last, to Himself. Man's immeasurable need is to be met by telling man, as only those who personally know can tell, about the Son of God and Man, the one Name of Life, Christ Jesus the Lord.

¶ It is true that the Revised Version gives us one change of rendering here which is to be observed. Instead of "witnesses unto me," it reads, "my witnesses"; and this is a closer rendering

[1] W. A. N. Hall.

of the Greek of St. Luke, or at least a rendering more likely to be quite close. Yet the difference, while we notice it, is not such as to negative, but rather to include, the meaning of the Authorized Version.[1]

¶ There is an interesting story of Doré, the artist, that once, crossing the Italian frontier, he had mislaid his passport and was called upon to prove his identity. This he did by taking a sheet of common paper and a piece of charcoal, and tracing the homely, manly features of Victor Emmanuel. The officers knew that only Doré could draw like that. Challenged by the world as we are, is it not for us to trace, here and now, on the rough surface of our common lives, with only such instruments as our ordinary circumstances afford, the character of our King? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples."[2]

(2) The witness must be in the Holy Spirit. Without the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit our witness is bound to be a failure and a disappointment. Let none of us be content with a lower spiritual experience than God is willing to give us. As long as we keep our witness within the bounds of what we can obviously succeed in, we shall accomplish little, but when in abandonment of self, and in reliance on the Holy Spirit, we attempt great things for God, our success will exceed our highest hopes.

Wanting is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love![3]

[1] H. C. G. Moule. [2] C. C. Albertson.
[3] Browning, *Dramatic Idylls*, 167.

Whitsun Day.

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WHITSUN DAY.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.—Acts ii. 4.

1. THE Day of Pentecost, or Whitsun Day, is the birthday of the Christian Church. On that day the Divine society was constituted. Not till Pentecost were Christians a distinct corporate body. On that day the Divine life, the life of the Holy Spirit of God, was infused into its members, and the first cry of the newborn Divine society was praise—"They spake in other tongues the wonderful works of God."

The day chosen was striking and suggestive. Proselytes from various countries were all gathered together with the Jews of Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Weeks. It was Pentecost, the fiftieth day—a week of weeks—since Passover. At Passover a sheaf of ripe barley had been waved in the Temple; at Pentecost the two loaves of fine flour made from the newly gathered wheat were now being waved in the Holy Place. And it was harvest. What better occasion for the outpouring of the Spirit, the "Giver of life," than this feast of Pentecost, when the first-fruits of the great Spiritual harvest of both Jews and Gentiles were offered unto the Lord who had redeemed them?

Moreover, Pentecost was celebrated as the anniversary of the giving of the law from Sinai, after the wanderings of the children of Israel for seven weeks from the first Passover in Egypt. How fitting a festival for the first outpouring of the Spirit, whereby that law might be observed in its fullest meaning, not as uttered amid the terrors of Sinai, but as revealed in Him who fulfilled the law and the prophets to the uttermost.

2. On this great festival the apostles and disciples were assembled together in Jerusalem. They were praying. They were waiting for the promise of the Spirit. Suddenly the whole

place was shaken as with a tempest, and bright flames, like tongues of fire, flickered for a moment over every head. These were, indeed, wonderful outward signs; but we must not think of this rush of tempest, and this shower of flaming tongues, as the most wonderful thing that happened. They were but the outward signs of something more wonderful still. The Holy Ghost filled the hearts of all that were present—not only the apostles, but also the men and women who were with them; and they burst out into loud shouts of praise and thanksgiving to God.

3. "They were all with one accord in one place." There is no absolute certainty what that place was or who were the recipients of the gift there bestowed. Some have thought that it was within the precincts of the Temple, and the early testimony of Josephus (*Antiq.* viii. 3. 2) is appealed to in support of this. He says the term here used (οἶκος) was applied to describe the thirty chambers which ran round the Temple of Solomon; but though open and easily accessible, none of them could have held so large a multitude; and it is extremely difficult to believe that the Priests and Pharisees would have allowed such a gathering of the despised followers of One whom they had crucified but a few weeks before. Although, then, it would have been intensely significant had the New Covenant been inaugurated within the very shrine of the Old, we are compelled to look for some other scene. Tradition has placed it in that Upper Chamber, in which we know that the first Christians were wont to hold their religious meetings.

4. On whom was the gift bestowed? It is impossible to say whom St. Luke intended when he spoke of "all." Perhaps the more general belief has limited it to the Apostles, as the Whitsuntide preface in the Book of Common Prayer unhesitatingly teaches; there is ancient testimony, however, to the inclusion of "the one hundred and twenty," and some extension beyond the Twelve is almost necessitated by the language of Joel's prophecy, which, St. Peter says, was fulfilled on this occasion. The expression was perhaps intended to embrace all the believers in Christ then congregated in Jerusalem.

¶ Can it surprise us that the world, which has no eyes and

no heart for spiritual things, usually appreciates this feast least of all, and rather seeks its satisfaction in the enjoyment of nature than in gratitude for the copious outpouring of the Spirit? Men must in some degree be filled with the Holy Ghost in order to value aright the blessing of this day; they must with the eye of the Spirit have seen something of the glory of the New Dispensation, in order to know fully the value of the declaration: "The promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Just this is the glory of the feast of Pentecost, that it not merely renews the remembrance of a most interesting event in the past, but, moreover, points us to the source of richest blessing for the present, and opens to us the brightest prospect for the so frequently beclouded future.[1]

I.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit.

The words of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit seem to have made but little immediate impression upon His sorrowing disciples. Probably they were too full of trouble to comprehend their meaning, and too indifferent to consolation to care to understand. Love in tears is apt to be petulant. The suggestion of any possibility of compensation for impending loss is resented as an insult and a reproach. The promise that Another should fill His place brought no comfort. They did not want Another. To speak of a successor was a reflection upon their devotion, and to say the exchange would be to their advantage could be nothing but the exaggeration of compassion. Grief for impending loss refuses to be comforted. So the promise of the Paraclete brought little light to their understanding, and apparently less comfort to their hearts. It was not until the Ascension that their eyes were opened. The Resurrection filled them with a great joy, but not until they witnessed His return to the Father did they realize the true greatness of their Lord and the meaning of His Mission in the world. As they beheld Him rise, the mists lifted from their understanding, and they returned to Jerusalem, not like bereaved and broken men, but rejoicing and praising God. The vision of the opened heavens had given them a new conception of all things in heaven and on earth. Infinity had received a

[1] J. J. van Oosterzee, *The Year of Salvation*, i. 475.

new centre, for the eternal glory was embodied in a Person they knew; prayer had a new meaning, for it was through a Name they uttered with familiar affection; faith had received a new basis, for it was in the Christ they had loved and proved. For ten days they waited with their eyes set upon the heavens where they had seen Him disappear from their sight. With Pentecost came the fulfilment of His word, and the gift in which they found the complete realization of all that He had said.

1. Let us first see how the disciples were prepared to receive the Gift.

The coming of the Holy Spirit involved the preparation of a people to receive Him. There was an extended and an immediate preparation. The *extended preparation* of the disciples covered the whole course of Christ's ministry and fellowship. Unconsciously, they had come to know the Spirit in Christ. Everything in the life, teaching, and work of Jesus was a manifestation of the power and method of the Spirit. As the end approached, He prepared their minds for His coming by definite instruction and promise. He talked with a glow and enthusiasm of the Spirit calculated to kindle their desire and expectation. They were told of His wisdom and power, and the wonders He would do for them, exceeding all they had seen in their Lord. Faith cometh by hearing; after the Resurrection they seem to have heard of little else but the wonders of the Coming One; and the last words of the ascending Lord were words of promise concerning Him. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." If they had not heard they would not have expected, and could not have received.

The *final stage of their preparation* was in united and believing prayer. The baptism came to the prepared. For ten consecutive days they remained in prayer. They were of one accord and in one place. A common object drew them together, a common expectation focused their faith, and focused faith always prevails. The fact that they continued for ten days proves both their earnestness and their faith. They waited earnestly for God, pleaded the promise of Christ, and had faith in His word.

2. The coming of the Holy Spirit is symbolized in the elements of *wind* and *fire*. Let us then consider the meaning which underlies these symbols.

Wind.

What a gentle thing wind is! What a powerful thing wind is! You hear of an evening the gentle breeze whispering so sweetly through the trees; you turn your face to it, and the wind falls so softly on your opened eye, that even that eye, which the smallest speck of dust can injure, is unhurt by it. The bubble which a touch of your finger will destroy floats unharmed in it; the thistledown is borne unbroken for miles by it; and, even in winter, the snowflakes, so fragile that your touch is destruction to them, are whirled round and round uninjured in their purity and beauty. How gentle the wind is, but how strong! Those great trees of the forest that have stood for ages, and clutched the earth far and wide with their spreading roots, fall before the storm; and the mighty ships, that seem so majestic in their power, are driven to destruction before the tempest, and cast in splintered wreckage on our shores. Even so is the Spirit of God: speaking so tenderly to the heart of some little child; filling young souls with every true, and beautiful, and loving thought that they have, and moving the strongest men to penitence and faith. The Spirit of God is gentle as the breeze, strong as the storm.

¶ The wind is a favourite Biblical image for the movements and goings of God's Spirit. Prophet and psalmist alike speak of the wind as symbolizing God's power. "Come from the four winds, O breath," cried Ezekiel, in the vision of the dry bones. "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet," says the prophet Nahum. In the Book of Job the poet represents God as speaking in the wind. And so, too, Jesus, who came to fulfil the sayings of the prophets, said: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."[1]

(1) One of the psalmists speaks about God bringing the wind out of His treasuries. That must be *the wind that blows healthily*

[1] D. L. Ritchie.

to heal our sicknesses; whose every kiss is tonic, whose rude and wild embrace is strength. Whether it comes rushing over the mountains, or tearing down the gullies, or skipping over the summer sea as a gentle breeze to cool the fevered brow, it comes as a cleanser, as life-giver, as health-bringer. Its very buffetings are health. Now that is what God's Spirit is to the spirit of a man. It is life and health and peace. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about birth by the Spirit and compared it to the wind, the reference was to the evening breeze just whispering among the olive groves. A ripple and a rustle and it is gone, and thou canst not tell whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

¶ It is an old Jewish saying that Moses died from the kiss of God. How true it is to say that many people, especially young people, live because of the kiss of the Spirit. One imprint on their young hearts and they give themselves in love to the great God and His Christ. Yes, God's Spirit still comes like the zephyr, wooing and winning, like the breeze which you can scarcely feel upon your hand, though you know it on your more delicate brow. So He comes to many hearts in pensive hours, in times and seasons of holy quiet and blessed meditation; so He comes, too, in life's morning to young souls.[1]

The Lord of brightness and of warmth,
Of fragrance and of dew,
Who having joy in life and growth,
Finds pleasures ever new;
To herbs the earth, and trees the heaven caressing,
Alike He gives His soft and sunny blessing.[2]

(2) But the Holy Spirit also comes *as a mighty rushing wind*, as He came of old, and then He comes with great and stirring power; and the Church has so known the Holy Spirit's coming in the times of great revival. He comes to spirits, invigorating and renewing them until they have a new life, as if it were life from the dead.

And every virtue we possess,
And every conflict won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone.

[1] D. L. Ritchie. [2] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 149.

Oh! that God's Spirit would come in both ways to the Church to-day, kissing spirits until they live, moving and thrilling the heart of the Church until there is a great revival of spiritual religion, and a quickening and bracing of all the powers of righteousness in our beloved land.

Hail, mightiest and bounteous wind,
Distributor of wealth,
Who giving, comest to confirm
Or to restore our health;
A blessing thou, bright energy diffusing,
For every other blessing's happiest using.[1]

(3) And there is another function of the wind. It is sometimes *a winnowing wind*, separating chaff from grain, the false from the true; or it sometimes comes as a blight. There is, for example, the sirocco that starts in the heart of Africa, and, with its blighting breath, passes over whole tracts of country, leaving nothing but destruction in its train. Yes! the wind blights as well as gives health and strength; and so does God's Spirit. God's Spirit gives health and vigour to every virtue we possess, and it seeks to blight for ever every sin that besets our nature or reigns in our life.

A rushing, mighty wind across the sky,
A swirling, swinging, roaring, ringing breath
Which seems to fill the world, as, flying by,
It sweeps the pathway both of life and death.

Into our hearts it blows, and bears away
All evil thoughts, all hate, and strife, and sin,
All dust of hopes and fears and sorrows grey,
To let the light of love and truth within.

So Charity shall come, a living flame,
A fire divine, a firm and steady glow,
The pulsing light of life, for aye the same,
To make us tender kindly words to know.

Thus, year by year, the nodding, bending trees,
Whose sentient branches swiftly bear along
The cleansing, rushing, purifying breeze,
Shall sing Earth's mighty Pentecostal song.[2]

[1] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 149.
[2] M. A. B. Evans, *The Moonlight Sonata*, 118.

Fire.

Fire has three uses—it gives light, it gives heat, and it purifies.

(1) The Spirit of God comes to us as *light.* It comes to enlighten us, to show us the meaning of God's blessed Word, to explain to us what God is, and what our blessed Saviour's life and death meant for us; and so to teach us many things which we cannot know without Him. So we say in the Collect for this day that God did teach the hearts of His faithful people, by sending to them the Light of His Holy Spirit. And so, according to one interpretation, the Day of Pentecost is called Whitsun Day because God gave to His disciples "wit," *i.e.* "wisdom," as the word "wit" used to mean.[1]

¶ "It is with man's Soul," says Carlyle, "as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light." And of Conversion he says: "Blame not the word, rejoice rather that such a word, signifying such a thing, has come to light in our modern Era, though hidden from the wisest Ancients. The Old World knew nothing of Conversion; instead of an *Ecce Homo*, they had only some *Choice of Hercules.* It was a new-attained progress in the Moral Development of man: hereby has the Highest come home to the bosoms of the most Limited; what to Plato was but a hallucination, and to Socrates a chimera, is now clear and certain to your Zinzendorfs, your Wesleys, and the poorest of their Pietists and Methodists."[2]

Spirit, guiding us aright,
Spirit, making darkness light,
Spirit of resistless might,
Hear us, Holy Spirit.

(2) Fire gives *heat* as well as light. The Holy Spirit not only teaches us about God and about Christ, but He makes our hearts flame up in love to Him.

With feet of burning brass,
When times are dark as night,
Thou through the world dost pass,
Consuming in our sight
Dry trees and withering grass,
With dreadful, happy light.

[1] T. Teignmouth Shore. [2] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. ii.

O thou consuming fire,
  Why should I fear thy flame,
Who purpose and desire
  To burn what Thou shalt blame,
Ill weeds, and every brier
  Of folly and of shame?

With shining beams that smite
  The chains of darkness through,
Thou smilest in the height,
  And all things smile anew;
Thy heat, in subtle might,
  Works with the gentle dew.

O Thou creating fire,
  I feel thy warmth benign;
My hopes a flowering spire
  Arise, unfold, and shine;
And fruits that I desire
  Shall soon be mine and Thine.[1]

(3) And fire is used *to purify*. Have you ever seen a piece of ore? It looks like a bit of common, hard, dirty rock, with just here and there a little, tiny, bright spot. You might hammer away at it for a long time trying to get those little pieces of metal out of it, and you would splinter it all about, and not succeed in getting the metal after all. But take it to a furnace, and there the fierce red and white heat will burn up all the dross, and the pure metal streams forth. A great deal of what is earthy is mixed up in our natures with a little that is pure; then the Spirit of God descends like illuminating and purifying fire. By all our trials and discipline, that Spirit purges out of us all that is base, and false, and earthy. "Our God is a consuming fire," but He will consume only the dross, and will set free the true gold of our nature, so that it may be one day pure enough to be formed into part of the Crown of the King, and to flash in its loveliness and beauty in the eternal glory of the Father's presence.

Those delicate wanderers,
The wind, the star, the cloud,
Ever before mine eyes
As to an altar bowed,
Sighs and dew-laden airs
Offer in sacrifice.

[1] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 121.

The offerings arise:
Hazes of rainbow light,
Pure crystal, blue, and gold,
Through dreamland take their flight;
And 'mid the sacrifice
God moveth as of old.

In miracles of fire
He symbols forth His days;
In gleams of crystal light
Reveals what pure pathways
Lead to the soul's desire,
The silence of the height.[1]

II.

Filled with the Holy Spirit.

Let us now inquire what is meant by the words "filled with the Holy Spirit." Very many people have had their minds more or less exercised touching the blessing of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," as it is often termed. Not a few have been hindered, if not actually thrown back, in their spiritual course, simply for lack of a little instruction in the very first principles of the doctrine concerning the Person, offices, and work of the Holy Spirit.

1. The first point to be recognized, as clearly set forth in the Scriptures, is the fact, that *all Christians have the Holy Spirit.* They have not only been brought under His influence, but they have received the Holy Spirit Himself. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9).

2. At the same time we must recognize the fact that to *have* the Spirit is one thing, but to be *filled* with the Spirit is quite another thing. We know from what is recorded in St. John's Gospel that even before the Ascension the Holy Ghost had actually been given to the disciples, that Christ breathed upon them the Holy Ghost. But on the Day of Pentecost they were *filled* with the Holy Ghost.

¶ There are upon the whole two main aspects or phases of the

[1] "A. E."

fulness of the Spirit. There is a special, critical phase, in which at a great crisis it comes out in marked, and perhaps wholly abnormal, manifestation, as when it enables the man or woman to utter supernatural prediction or proclamation. And there is also what we may call the habitual phase, where it is used to describe the condition of this or that believer's life day by day and in its normal course. Thus the Seven were not so much specially "filled" as known to be "full"; and so was Barnabas. Into this holy habitual fulness Paul entered, it appears, at his baptism. On the other hand, the same Paul experienced from time to time the other and abnormal sort of filling; and it thus results that the same man might in one respect be full while in another he needed to be filled.[1]

3. What, then, have we to do in order to be "filled with the Spirit"? The answer to this question is not far to seek, for Christ has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." For "if ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke xi. 9–13). If, therefore, we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, then indeed we are not far from receiving the rich blessings of the gift, but *we must want the blessing and want it earnestly*, for the Holy Spirit will not fill unwilling hearts. But we have great encouragement to ask. He has promised, and He has repeatedly fulfilled His promise. We cannot ask more than He has already given in many lives.

Did we dare
In our agony of prayer,
Ask for more than He has done?
When was ever His right hand
Over any time or land
Stretched as now beneath the sun?

III.

Transformed by the Holy Spirit.

"They began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The words of the text are significant, and not the less so

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Veni Creator*, 211.

because, in some measure, symbolic. We must find the meaning which the symbolism contains. We have already been thinking of the symbols under which the Holy Spirit came—*wind* and *fire*, and how these symbols characterise the work of the Holy Spirit in us; we shall now see how the same symbols are connected with the gift of speaking with tongues. Wind is symbolic of *power*; fiery tongues are symbolic of *inspired speech*—"they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance."

i. The Immediate Results.

1. *Speaking with tongues.* The Authorized Version by speaking of "cloven" tongues, and Christian painters by their pictorial representations, have imported into the scene an unauthorized feature. It has been supposed that a bishop's mitre, with its divided crest, was first suggested by this erroneous idea of the shape of the tongues which rested upon the heads of the Apostles. The word translated "cloven" should be rendered "dividing" or "distributing themselves." The flame-like forms descended into the Upper Chamber in a body or compact mass, and then at once scattered themselves over the assembled company, one lighting upon the head of each. The original language seems to imply that it rested there for a moment only, and then suddenly vanished, symbolizing perhaps its transitory nature as a gift of tongues.

Now in histories of this kind we are always under a temptation to seize upon the most extraordinary feature of the story, and to take that as the essence of the whole. Thus one of the popular ideas of Whitsun Day has been that it commemorates the gift of languages to the Apostles, by which, though uneducated men, they were qualified in a moment of time to preach the Gospel to every nation under heaven. But, indeed, this gift of tongues (even if it were what is here supposed) is but a small part of the matter. The gift of tongues concerned only one generation, at any rate, and a very few individuals.

2. The greatest miracle of that day was *the transformation wrought in the waiting disciples.* Their fire-baptism transfigured them. Every part of their nature was vitalized, invigorated, and transformed in fire. Its effect upon their knowledge was all that

Christ had promised it should be. Their eyes were opened, their memories quickened, and their minds inspired. How clear all things appeared now that the Spirit shone upon them! The Cross, the Resurrection, and the Kingdom were all seen in their true meaning. Peter's address reveals an illumined intelligence, an apt and accurate interpreter, an Apostle on fire. The coming of the Spirit had turned the fisherman into a teacher, orator, and evangelist. The tongue of fire gave forth the word of wisdom and of power. As men listened they found their minds informed, their reasons convinced, their souls convicted, and their wills persuaded. The Apostles themselves became new men. They now no longer coveted wealth or power, or the honour of this world; they no longer desired to have again the kingdom restored to Israel, so that the Jewish dream of earthly dominion should be theirs, one of them sitting on the right hand of the King, and one on the left, each and all anxious to be first and highest. No, the unseen and everlasting world had been opened to their gaze, and they now saw all earthly things in their true light. The only real wealth was wealth within, purified and loving hearts. The only real honour was the honour that comes from God, the honour of God's likeness; above all, the honour of bringing many sons to God, multitudes of men and women delivered from evil and saved eternally. So they now preached with power; even the power of the Holy Ghost Himself; and this very day of Pentecost three thousand were added to their number, three thousand who the other day might have been among those that cried, "Crucify him, crucify him."

¶ The moral change wrought in the disciples, by the new baptism of the Spirit, is strikingly displayed in the case of one man. A difficult service was to be performed in Jerusalem that day. Had it been desired to find a man in London who would have gone down to Whitehall a few weeks after Charles was beheaded, and, addressing Cromwell's soldiers, have endeavoured to persuade them that he whom they had executed was not only a King and a good one, but a Prophet of God, and that, therefore, they had been guilty of more than regicide, of sacrilege; although England had brave men then, it may be questioned whether any one could have been found to bear such a message to that audience.

The service which had then to be performed in Jerusalem was

similar to this. It was needful that some one should stand up under the shadow of the temple, and, braving chief priests and mob alike, assert that He whom they had shamefully executed seven weeks ago was Israel's long-looked-for Messiah; that they had been guilty of a sin which had no name; had raised their hands against "God manifest in the flesh"; had, in words strange to human ears, "*killed the Prince of Life.*" Who was thus to confront the rage of the mob, and the malice of the Priests? We see a man rising, filled with a holy fire, so that he totally forgets his danger, and seems not even conscious that he is doing an heroic act. He casts back upon the mockers their charge, and proceeds to open and to press home his tremendous accusation, as if he were a king upon a throne, and each man before him a lonely and defenceless culprit.

Who is this man? Have we not seen him before? Is it possible that it can be Peter? We know him of old: he has a good deal of zeal, but little steadiness; he means well, and, when matters are smooth, can serve well; but when difficulties and adversaries rise before him, his moral courage fails. How short a time is it ago since we saw him tried! He had been resolving that, come what might, he would stand by his Master to the last. Others might flinch, he would stand. Soon the Master was in the hands of enemies. Yet His case was by no means lost. The Governor was on His side; many of the people were secretly for Him; nothing could be proved against Him; and, above all, He who had saved others could save Himself. Yet, as Peter saw scowling faces, his courage failed. A servant-maid looked into his eye, and his eye fell. She said she thought he belonged to Jesus of Nazareth: his heart sank, and he said, "No." Then another looked in his face, and repeated the same suspicion. Now, of course, he was more cowardly, and repeated his "No." A third looked upon him, and insisted that he belonged to the accused Prophet. Now his poor heart was all fluttering; and, to make it plain that he had nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth, he began to curse and swear.

Is it within the same breast where this pale and tremulous heart quaked that we see glowing a brave heart which dreads neither the power of the authorities nor the violence of the populace; which faces every prejudice and every vice of Jerusalem, every bitter Pharisee and every street brawler, as if they were no more than straying and troublesome sheep? Is the Peter of Pilate's hall the Peter of Pentecost, with the same natural powers, the same natural force of character, the same training, and the same resolutions? If so, what a difference is

made in a man by the one circumstance of being filled with the Holy Ghost![1]

ii. The Permanent Results.

1. The descent of the Holy Ghost was preceded by "a rushing mighty wind" which "filled all the house where they were sitting." It bespeaks the irresistible force of the Spirit, and the fact that it filled the whole chamber would seem to be emblematical of *the universality of its influence.* Apart, then, from its immediate effect upon the assemblage there gathered together, it was the first-fruits of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the whole mystical Body of Christ's Church in all places and through all time. It is this that marks off the Dispensation of the Spirit from those Dispensations which had preceded it. God had deigned to be present with special people, and at special times; He had even caused an embodiment of His presence to be manifested in a special place, resting like a cloud of glory above the mercy-seat. And again, God had been present in the Person of His Incarnate Son among the inhabitants of Palestine, but in both cases the Divine Presence had been circumscribed and local only; but from that first Whitsuntide and onwards God has enabled men, through the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, to realise His Presence everywhere, and *what before seemed to men to be local only has become universal.*

2. To the Jews in the wilderness and to the people in Palestine, *the Presence of God was wholly external, outside of themselves, but now it is within*; "Know ye not," says St. Paul, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" He meant to remind us of the inspiring thought that as the indwelling Spirit is felt to be ever prompting us to do what is right, so it should act as a deterrent from doing what is wrong. He meant us to realize that every time we yield to temptation, we sin not only against a God above and about us, but also against a God within us.

3. The life so filled is transformed. There may be some who will ask, *Does the Holy Spirit still fill the hearts of men and transform their lives, as we read that He did in the days of the*

[1] W. Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire*, 63.

Apostles? The answer to the question is one which rests on experience; it is not a matter of correct interpretation of symbols. We may easily go astray in interpreting symbols, and we need the valuable reminder which Dr. Swete gives us that when we have translated the words of the Bible into the terms of modern philosophy we have only substituted one set of symbols for another. The modern symbols may be more intelligible and less likely to be misunderstood than the old ones; but the ultimate truths will not be reached until we have passed, in the words which Cardinal Newman chose for his own epitaph, *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*.[1] Let us quote the words of Dr. Swete in answer to this question: "Communion with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit is not a theory or a dogma, but a fact of personal knowledge to which tens of thousands of living Christians can testify as the most certain of actualities."[2]

¶ Let us go back a century and a half ago, and compare the condition of things then with the condition of things to-day. In the year 1724 "gin-drinking infected the mass of the population with the violence of an epidemic." It is said that every sixth house in London was a gin-palace. Hogarth's cartoon retains the sign which stood outside the doors of these drinking dens—"Here you may get drunk for a penny; dead drunk for twopence—straw provided." The public-houses were open all night. Public opinion did not hold the character of any man to suffer through drunkenness. Dr. Johnson says to Boswell: "I remember, sir, when every *decent* person in Lichfield got drunk every night and nobody thought the worse of them." It was the mark of a *gentleman* to get drunk, and the standard of comparison was as "drunk as a lord." Again, in the social habits of the upper classes profane swearing was held to be a mark of good breeding, and to take the name of God in vain in almost every sentence was the mark of a gentleman and even of a lady. Look again at the sports of the people, perhaps the truest index to their character. On the Sunday the people gathered for cock-fighting, bull-baiting, and other cruel sports. If we could have stepped into the midst of the eager and excited crowd we might have cried indignantly—"This ought to be put down by law." But how impossible it would have seemed. How indignantly it would have been scouted. The members of Parliament were the ringleaders of the sport. The clergy thought themselves fortunate to own a winning bird. Now where is all that gone? What has made drunkenness a low and beastly

[1] *The Guardian*, 3rd February 1911. [2] Swete, *The Ascended Christ*.

habit? What has made swearing an utterly vulgar thing? Why has the law stepped in and put down cruel sports? Do you say that education has become more general, and that culture has brought in other and more refined tastes? No; it was the educated and cultured classes who led the fashion in these things. There is but one explanation. Wesley and Whitefield were filled with the Holy Ghost, and as they preached here and there a little company of men and women were converted—not many in comparison with the masses of the nation. And these converted men and women went forth amongst the neighbours and began to live a Christlike life. Each became a new moral standard amongst them. Each was a skylight through which the heavens shone down into the midst of the little community. Each of them witnessed that there was another life than that to which they had been accustomed, and *that* in every way a better and happier life. Each became a living conscience in which things were so much more definitely black or white than they used to be—blessedly good or uncomfortably bad. Each was a window through which men and women saw beyond the little present out into the eternities and the infinities. That wrought the reformation—witnesses unto Me.[1]

Oh, turn me, mould me, mellow me for use.
Pervade my being with thy vital force,
That this else inexpressive life of mine
May become eloquent and full of power,
Impregnated with life and strength divine.
Put the bright torch of heaven into my hand,
That I may carry it aloft
And win the eye of weary wanderers here below
To guide their feet into the paths of peace.
I cannot raise the dead,
Nor from this soil pluck precious dust,
Nor bid the sleeper wake,
Nor still the storm, nor bend the lightning back,
Nor muffle up the thunder,
Nor bid the chains fall from off creation's long enfettered limbs.
But I can live a life that tells on other lives,
And makes this world less full of anguish and of pain;
A life that like the pebble dropped upon the sea
Sends its wide circles to a hundred shores.
May such a life be mine.
Creator of true life, Thyself the life Thou givest,
Give Thyself, that Thou mayest dwell in me, and I in Thee.[2]

[1] M. G. Pearse. [2] Horatius Bonar.

Apostolic Christianity.

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Apostolic Christianity.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.—Acts ii. 42.

1. In these words are set forth the characteristic marks of the new Christian life to which the converts of Pentecost were pledged by their Baptism. The Apostles stand out as the core of the Church. About them the new disciples are gathered; from them the doctrine and discipline of the infant society proceed; they constitute a visible centre of unity.

2. The Church was not only holy, catholic, and apostolic, but it was also one. The world recognized that unity, and felt its power. A bishop of the Church in Ephesus was a bishop of the Church in Lyons, and a member of the Church in Alexandria was a member of the Church in Arles. The Church newly planted in Armenia was immediately brought into relation with the Church wherever it was already existing. There was a principle as real in the Church which was producing this unity, as the principle of gravity in the solar system which is binding it into unity and harmony. It is not difficult to discover that principle. If we turn to the inspired history of the Church, we shall find that principle of unity clearly stated. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." Here are four things—*the teaching, the fellowship, the sacrament,* and *the worship.*

¶ We greet one another cordially as brethren, and we meet in committees and on platforms and in various other ways. Some of us have become members of the Evangelical Alliance, and we have various ways of expressing the unity that remains to us across the divided lines of our Churches. Ah, but there was a time, gone by long, long ago, when all those who in any place confessed a common Lord exercised their unity around the same communion table, and in the courts which Christ had set up, and not in such committees and alliances as we have been compelled

to plan because we had fallen from the others. There was a time when it entered into no Christian mind that, in any place, those who confessed our common Lord were to sit down contented with a unity that was not expressed and could not be in Christ's ordinances and Christ's institutions. There was a time when, if anything fell out to break it, men were grieved and humbled and Apostles wrote moving letters to the Churches concerned; and after the Apostles were gone, the Church of Rome sent her letter to the Church of Corinth to entreat them to be visibly one in the institutions and ordinances which Christ gave them to express and to exercise their unity. There was such a time, and if since post-apostolic times the Church has gained something—and I think it has gained much—yet surely it has lost something too. There was something they had in the early Church, when they met around the same communion table and in the same institutions just as naturally as they went to one martyr-death together—there was something then which we have not now. Therefore we are bound to aim at it—we are bound to seek it as we can.[1]

¶ There are two notions of unity in men's minds. One of them is really the notion of uniformity. It has no place for diversity. It wants almost complete identity between the things which it compares. The other rejoices in diversity, and finds its unifying principle in the common motive or purpose out of which an infinite diversity of many actions may proceed. How vain the search for any unity but this! It is the unity of nature. The budding, bursting spring is full of it; a thousand trees all different from one another are all one in the oneness of the great life-power which throbs and pulsates in them all. And souls the most unlike, most widely separated from each other, are one in Christ. Christ is their principle of unity. The thinker pondering deep problems, the workman struggling with the obstinacy of material, the worshipper lost in his adoration, the men of all centuries, the men of all lands,—they are all one, if all their lives are utterances of the same Christ. It is beautiful, the way in which each new Christian strikes into this unity and becomes a part of it immediately. A man has been living by himself, seeming to find all his sources of activity in his own life. By and by the change comes and he is Christ's. The pulse of universal Christian life begins to beat through him. Now he is one with all men who, anywhere, are doing anything *by* Christ *for* Christ How he lays hold of and comprehends the ages![2]

[1] R. Rainy, in *The Life of Principal Rainy*, i. 168.
[2] Phillips Brooks.

The text names four elements as expressive of the variety in unity of primitive Christian life. They continued steadfastly—

I. In the Apostles' Teaching.
II. In the Fellowship.
III. In the Breaking of Bread.
IV. In the Prayers.

¶ The great Christian thinker and preacher of Protestant Lausanne, as he compared the splendour and enthusiasm of the Roman Benediction with the shorn and meagre rite of Genevan Calvinism, exclaimed in melancholy tones, "Rome has worship without the word, we have the word without worship." But the earliest Church, as delineated by its great historian, combines all these elements, and appeals to man through all his faculties. It appeals to his intellect by its doctrine. It awakens his social feelings—whether towards contemporary Christians, or spirits waiting in the world unseen, or great predecessors in the faith; nay, something higher still—"And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ." It deals with the soul in its most mysterious depths by the consciousness of a Presence at once awful and blessed. It has treasures, and it opens for every one of its children a language of sobs and rapture, of penitence and joy—a wealth of words that set themselves to some far-off music, which linger along fretted roofs, yet nestle in our hearts, and in our last hours sing us into the sleep of death as if with the lullaby of God. Thus, as in the description of her first structure, the Church is *doctrinal, social, sacramental, liturgical.* She is a school of teaching, a centre of social unity, a shrine of sacraments, a home of worship. The child of heaven, destined to an inheritance so splendid, was strong and radiant in her cradle. All the possibilities of her history and her being lay folded in her heart from the very first.[1]

I.

The Teaching of the Apostles.

1. "*The teaching of the Apostles*" was the necessary instrumentality for bringing the new converts to full discipleship. Their rudimentary faith needed a careful and continuous instruction, an instruction which replaced that which the scribes were in

[1] W. Alexander,

the habit of giving, so that in the most literal sense the Apostles might now be called scribes become disciples to the kingdom, bringing out of their treasure things new and old, the new tale of the ministry and glory of Jesus, the old promises and signs by which Law and Prophets had pointed onward to Him and His kingdom.

2. But, further, the teaching of the Apostles had a far wider range when their disciples were not converted Jews, but converted heathen. Then they had to create a new morality, to lay firmly that foundation which the Jews had received from their long tradition of legal righteousness, to adapt the principles to the novel conditions of Gentile life.

3. Can we tell what the teaching of the Apostles chiefly consisted of?

(1) Even a superficial study of St. Paul's Epistles enables us to understand the magnitude of the task which rested on the Apostles as religious teachers. Take, for sufficient example, the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We find clearly indicated there a teaching extraordinary in depth, range, and variety. St. Paul brings to the Corinthians the knowledge of Christ's life and death, and the substance of His revelation. He interprets the Old Testament in the light of Christian belief; he develops a detailed doctrine of the person and work of our Saviour. Consider how large a background of theological knowledge, built up in the Corinthians by systematic teaching, is implied in such a verse as this: "But of him (*i.e.* God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Is it not suggestive that we should find the great keywords of the Pauline theology in the least theological of his Epistles? In this same Epistle to the Corinthians we find a very definite and rich teaching about the Holy Spirit, an eschatological doctrine of great range and richness, the most careful moral teaching, and the delivery of practical rules, customs of the Christian society, which the Apostle does not hesitate to impose on the Corinthians. No doubt St. Paul stood out from the apostolic company as a great constructive theologian, and we cannot suppose that the other Apostles, with the exception of St. John, were able to bring to their converts so rich and varied

a volume of sacred science; but then we must remember that St. Paul, to use his own phrase, "laboured more abundantly than they all," and that, even in the apostolic age, his Epistles were widely disseminated. In the New Testament, then, alone we have abundant evidence of the active vitality of the teaching of the Apostles.

(2) But we can also bring evidence outside the New Testament. Two documents have come down to our own time with the claim to embody "the teaching of the Apostles," and though neither can vindicate an apostolic origin, yet both do certainly perpetuate aspects of the work of the Apostles as the teachers of the Christian society. The oldest of these documents is a curious moral treatise dating probably from the first half of the second century, though it may be much older, and actually entitled *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.* It illustrates the work which, especially among the Gentile converts, fell on the Apostles as creators of a Christian morality, which should replace the depraved and perverted traditions of heathen life. The other document, later in actual composition, is not less apostolic in character. It is known throughout the world as "the Apostles' Creed." Of course we must be watchful against the anachronism which would credit the Apostles with precise dogmatic forms, such as were afterwards received in the Church on the authority of their names. But though the so-called Apostles' Creed did not exist in apostolic times, we must admit that the *substance* of its teaching was primitive. The Ignatian Epistles, which are the connecting link between the Pastoral Epistles and the Apologists of the second century, prove that instruction was given in Antioch on all the points characteristic of the teaching of the developed creed.

(3) But by the "teaching of the Apostles," in which the first Christians continued, we are not to understand a detailed moral code, or an elaborated creed, but rather a progressive instruction, which included both morals and doctrine, which addressed itself with rare versatility to the novel and ever-varying requirements of a quickly expanding society; and always laid the emphasis on the things which were fundamental.

¶ I like the advice which Mr. Birrell gave at Whitefield's Institute: "Do not worry too much over the many things you are in doubt about; hang on with all your weight to the things,

however few, about which you are certain, and on the top of these certainties pile up work, work, work!" May I take a little liberty with one of the great sayings of Shakespeare, a liberty which does no fundamental violence to the text, "The truths thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy heart with hoops of steel."[1]

4. Thus from the beginning, the Church has possessed and depended upon a "teaching ministry"; and, though in later times the reason of that dependence may seem less evident, and though, for obvious reasons, the functions of the ministry have taken a less exalted character, yet, when we consider that every generation comes fresh to its problems, and that the unalterable principles of the Gospel have to find application to circumstances which are always novel, we shall be little disposed to question the title which the teaching ministry can still advance to the regard and consideration of believers. It is still the case of loyal and prudent Christians that "they continue steadfastly in the apostles' teaching," when they impose on themselves as a standing obligation of a well-ordered Christian life, the regular and devout attendance on the work of the Christian preacher.[2]

II.

The Fellowship.

The word translated "fellowship" (*κοινωνία*) comes from a root which means literally *sharing in common*. The practical nature of the fellowship is very clearly seen by comparing the ways in which the same word is translated in other places in the New Testament. As a rule Scripture is its own best interpreter. In Rom. xv. 26 the same word here translated "fellowship" is rendered "contribution"—"It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem." In 2 Cor. ix. 13 it is "distribution"—"Your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men." In Heb. xiii. 16 it is "communicate"—"To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." In 1 Cor. x. 16 it is "communion"—"The cup of

[1] J. H. Jowett, in *Examiner*, 9th February 1905. [2] H. H. Henson.

blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ." While in Phil. i. 5; ii. 1; iii. 10 it is plainly used in the sense of "participation." From all these Scriptures, the meaning of the word is clearly defined. It was the word used for the collection of money for the poor saints, and for the share which believers took in transmitting these alms to those in need. Fellowship in this sense is a most exalted and noble thing, and a privilege not to be lightly esteemed. It showed the oneness of the whole body of the faithful in state, in privilege, and in obligation. Sharing thus in common there was created a spirit of mutual recognition, a manifestation of common interests, and a closer partnership with each other in the blessings and privileges of the Gospel—leading them to share joyfully their goods with others. Taking the word in the meaning thus given, we cannot fail to see that the contribution or collection became a regular, an abiding institution in the Church of Christ.

1. There are thus three aspects in which to regard the Fellowship—

(1) It is evident that they encouraged each other in the things of God and continued to do so. They were as one loving family, and loving each other they took every means in their power to keep the glow of love aflame. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." What better means of encouraging the members of the Church can there be than by conversing freely together of the things of God? As the fellowship meant participation, communion; so in their intercourse with each other there was a constant interchange of thought in matters of spiritual experience.

¶ I fear this aspect of fellowship has been sadly lost in these days. How seldom we talk about God! We talk about anything —everything else—about leaders, teachers, sermons, books; but how seldom do we find the conversation, even among a party of Christians, centring round God; and yet one of the sweetest of the "precious and exceeding great promises" is given to those who practise the habit of speaking about God, and the things of God. In the same chapter in which we read of bringing "all the tithes into the storehouse," and so paying attention to the contribution, the collection, and proving the Lord of Hosts herewith, we also read these precious words: "Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book

of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I do make, *even* a peculiar treasure, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal. iii. 16–18).[1]

(2) They had a mutual regard for each other's welfare, and continued to show it. Communion, participation, fellowship cannot exist where one member is indifferent in the smallest degree to anything that affects the interest of another. The member who takes no interest in the welfare of his fellow-members is guilty of violating the partnership in which all believers are embraced. If I am one with him, what touches him, touches me; his sorrows, dangers, duties, joys, prosperity, or adversity are mine. In true fellowship there can be no isolation, no independence: all are sharers in common. If we are members of the body of Christ, then, in a very real sense, "there should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. xii. 25, 26).

(3) There was also regular, systematic provision made for practical help as it was required. Continuing in the Apostles' fellowship, it is clear that the members of the Church gave freely and willingly "as the Lord had prospered them" for the relief of poor saints, and that a regular distribution of the contributions so given was made to those in need. Later on, "when the number of the disciples was multiplied," it was found absolutely necessary to appoint deacons to take this matter in charge, that they, overlooking the temporal affairs, might leave the Apostles free to attend to the purely spiritual matters. That these contributions became a regular institution, a weekly ordinance, in the Churches of Christ, is clear from Paul's words to the "Church of God at Corinth." Following immediately upon the greatest, the profoundest treatise ever written upon the fundamental doctrine of the "resurrection," the Apostle, without pause or break, says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given

[1] J. D. Gilmore.

order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2).

2. St. Luke, according to the translation adopted in our versions, links together "teaching and fellowship"; but he certainly does not mean that the early Christians were *taught* to combine as they did. They entered into an intelligent unity sustained by intelligent communication; but their intercourse was the spontaneous outflow of the new life which, as believers in Christ, they had received. It was a Divine instinct, a soul of brotherhood, a disposition which breathed the atmosphere of "the household of faith." Good nature could find no sphere large enough for its expression. It was the observance of the second commandment in the most Christlike form the world had ever seen. It was the attainment of the mind of Christ in a measure which overflowed all human relationships. From the first we get an impression of wonderful unity and brotherliness as marking the Messianic community. With what moving power would the Master's words be rehearsed by men in whose imaginations the Speaker's looks and tones, as He had spoken them, still lived and gave each saying life! In the atmosphere of soul thus created self-contained isolation was simply impossible to believers. The impulse to "fellowship" of the most intimate and complete character mastered every other feeling. And in that fellowship they found their strength and stability.

¶ One of the most remarkable methods of preventing the encroachments of the sea upon the land, and fixing the loose sand along the shore, is by means of plants specially adapted for the purpose. These plants belong mostly to the grass tribe, though some are furnished with the flowers and foliage of higher orders. But they all possess in common the peculiarity of creeping underground stems, which at short intervals send up fresh shoots above the surface, and root themselves in the soil. These creeping underground stems enable them to subsist in the barren sand, and endure long periods of drought and sterility; while the rooting of the stems at frequent intervals, producing new individuals at every joint, all linked together, enables them to offer an effectual resistance to the storm. If undisturbed, these wonderfully constructed plants would speedily cover the largest

tract of sea-shore spontaneously, prevent the loose masses of sand thrown up by the waves from drifting, and render the soil sufficiently stable to support higher vegetation. Man has taken advantage of the peculiar habit of these seaside plants, and planted them along the banks which he erects as a barrier against the sea, and which without these would be blown away by the first hurricane. The enormous dykes which the people have constructed in Holland, to keep out the inundations of the German Ocean, owe their stability to these plants, which are carefully protected by the Government; and along the low eastern side of England, where the sea is seeking continually to encroach upon the shore, and is with great difficulty kept back, a large quantity of dry land has in this way been reclaimed from the waters. It is the social habit of these seaside plants that gives them their wonderful tenacity of life, and admirably adapts them for the conditions in which they grow. Each separate plant is weak and fragile; and if left to itself it would speedily perish in its sterile situation, and would be uprooted and swept away by the fury of the tide. But when linked and interlaced in the closest fashion, by a vital bond, with the whole mass of similar plants growing around, it can hold its own against the strongest forces of the ocean. It is as nearly indestructible from natural causes as anything can be; and it is one of the most striking proofs of the power of feeble things that are endowed with life, to resist, when in combination, the mightiest forces of mechanical nature.[1]

III.

The Breaking of Bread.

We pass on now to the *breaking of bread.* There can be no question that here we have "the Holy Communion in its primitive form as an Agape or supper of communion,"[2] or rather as a commemoration associated with an Agape or supper of communion. For it is manifest that, in considering the language of St. Luke, we cannot separate it from that of his great master, St. Paul. We are compelled to seek in the First Epistle to the Corinthians the meaning of this simple expression, characteristic of the Acts, "the breaking of bread." Now, in the tenth and eleventh chapters of that Epistle, St. Paul evidently describes the Agape as preceding the Eucharist. The latter he clearly asserts to be an institution

[1] Hugh Macmillan. [2] F. J. A. Hort.

of Christ, and to bear a character of the utmost gravity. He rehearses the history of that institution, and bases on it some stern and awful censures of the profaneness which marked the Corinthian practice. The "breaking of the bread" was something more than the formal act by which a social festivity was inaugurated. It was more than an eloquent symbol—more than a solemn act of commemoration. It was the current phrase for a religious rite to which the Apostle evidently attributed the greatest importance. The very phrase had historic reference; it was an appeal to the devout recollection of Christians—it recalled and set before them the Master Himself in "the night in which he was betrayed." The bread which then He blessed and brake was identified with the bread there placed on the table of the Eucharist, and the cup was the same. So the Apostle links together the profanities of the Corinthian Eucharist and that last supper in the room at Jerusalem, where Christ Himself had instituted the sacrament. "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body."

¶ How much lies behind that simple phrase "the breaking of bread!" However close the association of the Eucharist with the Agape was in the apostolic age, it never went so far as to submerge the distinctive character of the Sacrament. St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, not to say, also, the Gospel of St. John, which certainly reflects the eucharistic doctrine of the later apostolic age, absolutely prohibits the popular notion that the unique and awful significance of the Holy Communion belongs to the later period of the Church.[1]

¶ It is not uninteresting to compare with St. Paul's language the eucharistic prayer preserved in *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and gathered together became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom, for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever" (*Didache*, i. 4).

[1] H. H. Henson.

1. Now we have seen that St. Paul was very careful to dwell on the deep significance of the Holy Communion, and circumstances proved at this time how necessary this was. But the great precaution which was taken to guard the sacred observance of the Holy Communion does not preclude the *joyful association* which essentially attached to the "breaking of bread." The "Eucharist," the name given to that service, in itself indicates the manner in which the primitive Christians regarded it. "And this food is called among us *Eucharistia*, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."[1]

¶ In "The Breaking of Bread" *the Apostolic Christians possessed one abiding and unchanging secret* in which their whole spiritual being stood rooted, in possession of which they could face all that was before them, whatever the long and cruel years might bring. Here that secret was embodied. The innermost soul of this integral life was an act of organic worship, "the breaking of bread." Christ has passed out of sight, they see Him no more, and they now therefore have sorrow. Sorrow there must be. Nevermore would they have His visible presence in their midst, His voice in their ears, His breath on their brows. Nevermore would they move and walk and talk together, and sit at the same table, and eat in the same room. Nevermore the intimate and enthralling joy of that brief earthly companionship. "And ye now, therefore, have sorrow, but I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you, and your joy shall be full, and that joy no man can ever take from you." So He had promised, and the pledge of that promise being fulfilled came out of the heart of those days now gone, when they had eaten and drunk with Him as His friends that last meal in which the sweet earthly companionship had crowned its blessed intimacy, that last meal in which the old days of friendship had come to a close, and had said their last

[1] Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 64.

farewell—so that it seemed to them that a meal of wasted hope and broken hearts was indeed never to pass away. Protected from the fickleness and frailties of change, it was itself to become the undying form of that new companionship with the risen Master, by which and in which, through the working of the Spirit, He, with the Father to whom He had gone, would for ever come again to them and sit down with them, and eat and drink with them, and make His ever-living abode with them, drinking with them the new blood of the grape, as it is drunk in the kingdom of God.

2. Observe the witness which the Sacrament bears to the truths of Christian belief.

(1) And first of all the *wonder* that such a thing as this, a little bread and wine given as a keepsake by a Jewish man about to die the next day, should have become what the Christian Sacrament has been in the world for two thousand years, should have been found such as it has certainly been found by men—a treasure of truth to great thinkers; of sweet grace to saints and heroes; of simple blessing to homely and plain people; of deep mystery to philosophers and poets; that it should have gone with equal power through times so extraordinarily different, and among men of so many races and lands; nay, should have borne this witness of itself to men, who were engaged sometimes in keenest unhappy controversy about some part of its nature and meaning.

(2) Then what are we to say of Him who, on the edge of death, calmly appointed this thing? Nothing gives stronger witness to the Divine Power, hidden in the Death of Christ, than this, that these words and acts of a dying man became at once the best offering to God, all other sacrifice being put away. And the observance of it, not as a sad memorial of a departed saint, or prophet, or teacher, but as the glad remembrance of a living Lord, is the best of witnesses to the truth of the Resurrection. It was a great Protestant theologian in Germany who spoke of it as the "climax of the early Christian worship," and found "in its continuing celebration the first proof of the constant belief of Christians in the Divine nature of Christ." Could any mere memorial of the dead have kept its place, and shown the power of the Eucharist all down the centuries till now?

Sometimes I hear the happy birds
That sang to Christ beyond the sea,
And softly His consoling words
Blend with their joyous minstrelsy.

Sometimes in royal vesture glow
The lilies that He called so fair,
Which never toil nor spin, yet show
The loving Father's tender care.

And then along the fragrant hills
A radiant presence seems to move,
And earth grows fairer, as it fills
The very air I breathe with love.

And now I see one Perfect Face,
And, hastening to my church's door,
Find Him within the holy place
Who, all my way, went on before.[1]

IV.

The Prayers.

Finally, there is mention made of "the prayers." These, in Dr. Hort's opinion, are probably Christian prayers at stated hours, answering to Jewish prayers. If we knew more of the synagogue services in Palestine as they were before the fall of Jerusalem, we should perhaps find that these Christian prayers replaced synagogue prayers (which, it must be remembered, are not recognized in the law), as the Apostles' teaching may be supposed to have replaced that of the scribes.[2] We know that the Christians in Jerusalem, so long as the temple existed, were accustomed to attend its regular services, and it may well be the case that they also developed a synagogue service of their own. St. James, who presided over that Church, speaks of the Christian "synagogue." It is certain that the synagogue provided the model after which the liturgical services of the Church were originally fashioned—although from the first there were new elements, such as the reading of the apostolic epistles, the exercise of spiritual gifts,

[1] Horatio Nelson Powers. [2] *Judaistic Christianity*, 44.

the use of the Lord's Prayer, and, possibly also, Christian hymns, which gave a distinctive aspect to the worship of the Christian synagogue.

Now let us notice two points in connexion with "the prayers" of which we may well make practical application—the place of prayer in public worship, and the value of united prayer.

1. *The Place of Prayer in Public Worship.* Those who were converted by St. Peter's address remained steadfast in prayer: by which it is intended, not merely that they prayed privately by themselves, for this probably they did before, but that they were regular in attending the prayers of the Christian Church. The Church, though in its infancy, had yet its public services, and those who joined the Apostles' fellowship joined them in their united worship before the throne of God's grace. And this, it should be observed, is the proper fruit of a sermon; the sermon is rightly appreciated, is manifestly blessed by the Holy Spirit, when it leads persons to value and join heartily in the Church's prayers: the prayers are not the mere introduction to preaching, but preaching is intended to make people pray. This is the right order of things, and this is what we find in the history of the great Pentecostal Day. Whether or not this is so in these days is a question to be determined by experience; but this is certain, if any preaching is followed after merely for its own sake, and if the effect is not found to be greater earnestness and devotion in the prayers, then it may be the fault of the preacher, or it may be the fault of the people, but there *is* a fault somewhere, the preacher has missed his aim, his arrows have flown wide of the mark. The same Holy Spirit who came down upon the Church upon the Day of Pentecost, and made the preaching of St. Peter effectual to the conversion of three thousand souls, is with the Church still; and if it is found that in these days many people listen to sermons and yet do not show forth in their lives such clear, practical, almost unmistakable marks of the preaching having touched their hearts, then there is a fault somewhere. It cannot be with God's Holy Spirit; therefore it must needs lie between minister and people.

¶ It is said about us Free Churchmen that we think a great deal too much of preaching and a great deal too little of the prayers of the congregation. That is a stock criticism. I am

bound to say that there is a grain of truth in it, and that there is not, with too many of our congregations, as lofty a conception of the power and blessedness of the united prayers of the congregation as there ought to be, or else you would not hear about "introductory services." Introductory to what? Do we speak to God merely by way of preface to one of us talking to his brethren? Is that the proper order? "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching" no doubt; but also "steadfastly in prayer."[1]

2. *The Value of United Prayer.* Can there be any one who has never felt how the sympathy of others multiplies joy and mitigates sorrow? and in the domain of religion this is doubly and trebly true. Prayer and meditation upon God come so reluctantly from my heart when I pray and meditate alone, but seem as if they were winged when hundreds begin to pray and sing along with me, and seal the same confession with one general Amen.

¶ I often think of the negro woman who was once asked by the governor of Surinam why she and her fellows always prayed *together*. Could they not do it each one for himself? He happened to be standing at the time before a coal-fire, and the woman answered: "Dear sir, separate these coals from each other, and the fire will go out; but see how brisk the flame when they burn together." From the mere circumstance that when in fellowship with others our hearts grow warm, we can easily understand what the Saviour means when He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And again, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." This, says a devout man, is as when the whole children of a family take heart, and with one accord beseech the father for a boon. It is then far harder for him to refuse.[2]

¶ Prayer is much weaker than its real self if many do not join in it.[3]

O grant me, Lord, that in my fight
With foes unseen by day and night,
Whether I watch, or praise, or pray,
Victor or vanquished, still I may
Know myself one of an unnumbered host,
Nor feel, like severed branch, my labour lost.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] A Tholuck. [3] St. Basil, *Ep.* 68.

When singly I the foe provoke,
I fall beneath some sudden stroke
Aimed at my solitary head;
But if in compact rank arrayed,
I fight with millions at my side, no foe,
Whoe'er he be, has power to lay me low.

V.

They Continued Steadfastly.

1. Sudden conversions are not always lasting. Many causes besides enlightened conviction may bring about a change of view; and not the least powerful of those other causes is moral contagion. When a mass of men is moved deeply by impassioned eloquence, it is difficult even for a man of calm self-possession to retain the mastery of his emotions, and keep himself free from the influence of that strong sympathetic feeling which, like an electric current, runs through a crowd, and moves many souls, as the mighty rushing wind heaves and tosses the waves of the deep. And what is too often the sequel? Why, the utter absence of steadfastness in the doctrine of Christ. When the cause ceases, the effect disappears. The sympathy dies out for want of fresh stimulus. Then all is dead. Like a house without a foundation, the assumed Christian profession may be swept away into utter and irretrievable ruin by the first tempest that beats upon it. It is like a human body whose spinal column has been materially damaged; artificial props and stays are necessary to shore it up and prevent its collapse. One test then of sincere adhesion to Christ is steadfast adherence to His doctrine or His teaching—a walk and conversation in accordance with His mind and His precepts.

¶ I have sometimes heard of converts and workers at exciting revivals, who afterwards became limp and languid. When the missioner had departed, they felt like a wedding party when the bride and bridegroom have gone. When the huge choir was disbanded, the little chapel choir appeared so tame and commonplace, and worship indeed had come to its dregs! But here in the apostolic times the exciting day was over, the wonder had somewhat passed, but there was no perilous relapse. They

continued in the same road, stepping out determinedly, continuing steadfast in the way of life.[1]

2. Steadfastness implies in particular two points. It implies *definiteness* and it implies *diligence.* It suggests either a definite *standpoint* and diligence to maintain it, or a definite *aim* and diligence to achieve it. Examples are plentiful to illustrate our meaning. The sentinel at Pompeii who remained firm at his post until the stream of lava engulfed him in its fiery embrace—he was steadfast. The soldiers on the ship *Birkenhead* who stood in their serried ranks on deck while the women and children got safely off in the boats, and who went down in unbroken order into their vast and wandering grave—they were steadfast. They had a definite standpoint, and they were diligent to maintain it. Nor are instances wanting of definiteness of *aim* and diligence to achieve it.

¶ Perhaps one of the most striking is presented to us in the history of the famous Warren Hastings. Hastings, when but a boy, conceived a passionate longing to regain for his family the ancient home of his forefathers, Daylesford, which, owing to monetary losses, had passed into the hands of strangers. He was but a poor lad when first the desire seized his mind; but all through his long and chequered career this desire never left him, until towards the end of his life he accomplished his object, and purchased the ancestral home, where he ultimately died.[2]

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] S. C. Lowry.

The Saving Name.

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THE SAVING NAME.

And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.—Acts iv. 12.

THESE words were uttered by St. Peter, as representing the young Church of Christ, when, for the first time after her foundation, she stood fairly face to face with the hostile power of the world. On the Day of Pentecost she had encountered some playful or scornful mockery, which was silenced when St. Peter came forward and explained the true cause of the occurrences which excited it. But when the cripple was healed on the Mount of the Temple, the Jewish world roused itself in earnest. The miracle was performed in the most public place in Jerusalem; and immediately afterwards St. Peter had addressed a large multitude which gathered round him. He pointed out that Jesus, by the might of His Name, was the real worker of the miracle; that His exaltation and power were in accordance with prophecy; that it was a fact of the utmost moment to every one of his hearers. Hereupon three classes of persons became alarmed. The priests saw in the Apostles of Christ dangerous rivals to their own office and authority. The Sadducees—the unbelieving section of the literary class—were angered at the public discussion of a miracle, which, if true, condemned their own denial of a resurrection, and which they would gladly have buried beneath a contemptuous silence. The Captain of the Temple, as the guardian of public order—a sort of chief commissioner of police—was apprehensive that the excitement might lead to disturbances. These several personages and classes might well have taken the miracle to heart; they might at least have asked the question why it had so impressive a significance for an increasing section of the people. But questions of this

kind are not often considered in moments of passion. The prejudices of the past, combined with fears and resentment, carried the day; and they cast the Apostles into prison.

This done, it became necessary that the Apostles should be examined in court—the Court of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was solemnly convoked; it had, according to the law of Deuteronomy, to decide the point whether the Apostles were to be regarded as true prophets or as seducers to idolatry. The Court knew that the cripple had been healed by the Apostles—not in the Name of Jehovah, but in the Name of Jesus. And this seemed to establish the charge of idolatry; since nothing could be plainer to the Jewish mind than the distinction between Jesus the Crucified Prophet and the Almighty Jehovah. The first question, therefore, which the Court asked the Apostles was, By what power or by what name have ye done this? The Court, you will observe, does not enter upon the general question of the Apostles' teaching; it asks only who had been invoked to work the miracle. And St. Peter, standing before men who had his life in their hands, speaks directly to the point: "Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." And then he adds, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

The text contains two important topics—

I. Salvation.

II. The Saving Name.

I.

Salvation.

What a great word that word "salvation" is! It includes the cleansing of our conscience from all past guilt, the delivery of our

soul from all those propensities to evil which now so strongly predominate in us; it brings in, in fact, the undoing of all that Adam did. Salvation is the total restoration of man from his fallen estate; and yet it is something more than that, for God's salvation fixes our standing more securely than it was before we fell. It finds us broken in pieces by the sin of our first parents, defiled, stained, accursed: it first heals our wounds, it removes our diseases, it takes away our curse, it puts our feet upon the rock Christ Jesus, and having thus done, at last it lifts our heads far above all principalities and powers, to be crowned for ever with Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven. Some people, when they use the word "salvation," understand nothing more by it than deliverance from hell and admittance into heaven. Now, that is not salvation: those two things are the *effects* of salvation. We are redeemed from hell because we are saved, and we enter heaven because we have been saved beforehand. Our everlasting state is the effect of salvation in this life. Salvation, it is true, includes all that; but still it would be wrong for us to imagine that that is all the meaning of the word. Salvation begins with us as wandering sheep; it follows us through all our many wanderings; it puts us on the shoulders of the shepherd; it carries us into the fold; it calls together the friends and the neighbours; it rejoices over us; it preserves us in that fold through life; and then at last it brings us to the green pastures of heaven, beside the still waters of bliss, where we lie down for ever in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, never more to be disturbed.

Let us group the uses of the word "salvation" under these three classes—(i.) Salvation from physical infirmity; (ii.) National Salvation; (iii.) Salvation from Sin.

i. Salvation from Physical Suffering.

The healing of the cripple was on the face of it a physical salvation. Bodily pain and discomfort, continued through many years, unless it be transfigured by patience and resignation into a consummate blessing, may crush out its very heart and hope from a human life. And anyhow, pain is a disorder and anomaly in nature. When it is inevitable, we may be sure that God has

some high and merciful purpose in inflicting it. When it is not inevitable, our business is, if we can do so, to cure it. Our Lord worked then by the agency of the Apostles what He works now by the generous hearts, and kind hands, and cultivated understandings of those whom He guides, in hospitals and elsewhere, to the relief and cure of bodily pain. His precepts, His charity, His unseen but energetic Spirit, are the source of the best and noblest inspirations of our modern philanthropy, even where the cause is unrecognized or unsuspected. And as the result is, in its degree, a salvation, so the inspiring force is the grace and charity of the Saviour.

¶ Europe was thrilled by the story of the steamer *Berlin* which fought its way from Harwich across the North Sea to the Hook of Holland in the teeth of a terrible gale. At half-past five in the morning (February 20, 1907) it was dashed on the North Pier and broken up. The fore part of the steamer went under and carried the greater part of the passengers and crew to death. On the following day eleven survivors were rescued. Three women remained behind, exposed to the biting cold and the terrific lash of the breakers. It seemed impossible that they should survive the long and exhausting exposure, and hope of their being saved almost died out. But Captain Sperling, as noble a hero as ever faced the perils of the deep, determined to make an effort on their behalf. We are told he could not sleep for thinking of the awful plight of these women, alone there on the wreck for two days and a night. And so he matured his plans, and when the moment for action arrived dared everything, swam through seething billows to the wreck, and passed the women one by one along the rope to safety. And next day the world rang with the news that the three women were saved by the heroic deed of this noble man. *Saved!* Yes, it was a *real salvation.* There was no doubt about the meaning of the word and the significance of the transaction. They were saved from hunger, saved from cold, saved from death by exhaustion or by drowning. We can all appreciate the nature of this salvation—the saving of human lives from the angry sea.[1]

ii. National Salvation.

When St. Peter talked of "the salvation" in the Court of the Sanhedrin, he would have meant and he would have been understood to mean something much greater in itself, and much wider

[1] A. R. Henderson.

in its range of application, than any bodily cure; something of which a bodily cure was a mere figure and presentment.

1. Salvation was already a consecrated word in the language of Israel. It had been so for centuries. It meant very generally the deliverance of Israel from outward and inward enemies; it meant the deliverance of Israel as a whole; it meant especially a national salvation. That was the point of St. Peter's reference to Psalm cxviii., which was composed for the first observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in the newly rebuilt Temple, after the return from the Babylonish captivity. St. Peter quotes the famous lines in which Israel, lately restored to the land of her ancestors, is spoken of as a "stone which the builders rejected, and which had been made the head of the corner." The new Temple would have naturally suggested the figure. Israel, rejected and downtrodden by the proud nations who aspired to build up the future of the Eastern world, had been lifted by God into a place of honour: Israel was to be in some way the corner-stone of that temple of souls which God would build for the future of humanity.

2. The deeper Jewish commentators saw that the words must really apply, not to Israel as a whole, since the nation had morally fallen too low for such high distinction, but to the expected Messiah, its ripe product and its splendid Representative. And accordingly our Lord Jesus Christ, just after His public entry into Jerusalem, when the people had saluted Him in other words of this Psalm, applied to Himself what was said about the corner-stone; He was Himself the corner-stone; and Israel, in rejecting Him, was repeating the crime of the Gentiles in rejecting Israel.

3. When, therefore, St. Peter, standing before the Court of the Sanhedrin, said that Jesus was "the stone set at nought by you builders," he was following His blessed Master's guidance. It had been Christ's own way of saying as vividly as He could to His countrymen, that although rejected and crucified, He was the true Hope and Deliverer of Israel. And thus the salvation of which St. Peter speaks was the salvation which Messiah was to bring. It was the salvation to which Israel was looking forward. It was the salvation of which the healing of the cripple had been a figure. Israel was the real cripple after all, and her rulers knew it.

4. To the nation, then, St. Peter preaches that the present is a time of repentance, during which God gives to Israel opportunity to return to Him, and the Apostle consequently renews the call to repentance given by Jesus Himself, promising to those who repent and are baptized the advent of the great Messianic salvation. But the repentance required is no longer only the general repentance taught by Jesus. It is the specific wickedness of the Jewish nation, misguided by their rulers, in crucifying Jesus, that requires to be repented of; and the positive side of this repentance is faith in Jesus as the Messiah. He is proclaimed as the only Saviour in the approaching day when those who reject Him will be cut off.

iii. Salvation from Sin.

There is one theological word which has found its way lately into nearly all the newer and finer literature of our country. It is not only one of the words of the literary world at present, it is perhaps *the* word. For it represents something, the reality of which, its certain influence, its universality, have at last been recognized; and in spite of its being a theological word it has been forced into a place which nothing but its felt relation to the wider theology of human life could ever have earned for a religious word. That word, it need scarcely be said, is *Sin*. Even in the lighter literature of our country, and this is altogether remarkable, the ruling word just now is *Sin*. Years ago it was the gay term *Chivalry* which held the foreground in poem and ballad and song. Later still, the word which held court, in novel and romance, was *Love*. But now a deeper word heads the chapters and begins the cantos. A more exciting thing than chivalry is descried in the arena, and love itself fades in interest before this small word, which has wandered out of theology, and changed the face of literature, and made many a new book preach.

Professor Henry Drummond says that there are three deadly facts about sin—its guilt, its stain, and its power; and there are three facts of salvation—forgiveness, healing, redemption. These facts are stated in Ps. ciii. 3, 4: "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction."

1. The first deadly fact of sin is *its guilt*—that is, the blame-

worthiness that follows the doing of it. When we say that the sinner is guilty, we mean that he is to blame for his sin. The responsibility for it abides on him. The wickedness of it is his. And this guilt, this blameworthiness, is all the more terrible from the fact that we are responsible to God. This is the most tragic thing about sin. It is not merely a violation of our own nature or a breaking of an abstract law. Sin is *against* something—it is a pushing of the will against something. Yes, against some *one*. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," cries the Psalmist, and all who have read deepest into the human heart agree with him. Sin is against God. It is a violation, a setting aside of the will of the living God, that will in which alone we can have eternal life. God is absolutely holy and good. And sin is an offence against Him, a disobedience to Him, a separation from Him, a breaking up of the harmony that ought to be between man and God.

Now the question which we must ask in order to meet this first fact of sin is, Where can I get pardon? This is a question asked by conscience, and the questions which conscience sends up to us are always the deepest questions. The man who has never sent up the question, "Where can I get pardon?" has never been into his conscience to find out the deepest want he has. It is not enough for him to look lifeward; he must also look Godward. And it is not enough to discover the stain of his past, and cry out, "I have sinned." He must see the guilt of his life and cry, "I have sinned *against God*." Now the punishment of sin is death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Therefore death is the punishment which must be in one of the facts of salvation. It will not meet the case if the sinner professes his penitence and promises humbly never to do the like again. Death, and nothing less than death, must be in the fact of salvation from the guilt of sin, if such salvation is to be. This fact, this most solemn necessity, understood and felt, the rest is plain. We all know who deserved to die. We all know who *did* die. We know *we* were not wounded for our transgressions, we were not bruised for our iniquities. But we know who was. The Lord hath not dealt with us according to our iniquities; but we know with whom He has. We know who bare our sins in His own body on the tree—One who had no sins of His own. We know who was lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness—He

who died, the just for the unjust. If we know this, we know the great fact of Salvation, for it is here.

2. The second fact about sin is *its stain.* The soul is defiled by it. All sin is a defilement. Your most respectable sin leaves a mark on the soul. The soul is tainted by it as a glass of pure water is tainted by a drop of ink. The virgin beauty of the soul is lost. And sometimes the stain becomes so foul that we are shocked by the uncleanness of the sinner's speech and taste and actions. And the stain of sin, like the spot of blood on Lady Macbeth's hand, is something that we cannot wash out.

What must I do to be saved from the stain of sin? Gather up your influence, and see how much has been for Christ. Then undo all that has been against Him. It will never be healed till then. This is the darkest stain upon your life. The stain of sin concerns your own soul, but that is a smaller matter. That can be undone—in part. There are open sores enough in our past life to make even heaven terrible. But God is healing them. He is blotting them from His own memory and from ours. If the stains that were there had lingered, life would have been a long sigh of agony. But salvation has come to us. God is now helping us to use the means for repairing a broken life. He restoreth thy soul, He healeth all thy diseases. But thy brother's soul, and thy brother's diseases? The worst of our stains have spread far and wide beyond ourselves; and God will only heal them, perhaps, by giving us grace to deal with them. We must retrace our steps over that unburied past, and undo what we have done.

¶ A young man once lay upon his death-bed. He was a Christian, but for many days a black cloud had gathered upon his brow. Just before his last breath, he beckoned to the friends around his bed. "Take my influence," he said, "and bury it with me."[1]

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?

Or golden coins squander'd and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

[1] Henry Drummond.

I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murder'd self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"
"And I—and I—thyself" (lo! each one saith),
"And thou thyself to all eternity!"[1]

3. The third deadly fact about sin is *its power*. The sinner soon finds that he is in bondage to a habit. Sin has an enslaving power. The tragedies that have arisen from this deadly fact of sin! The tyranny of evil that began with a single sinful act! All human experience testifies to the fact that one sin makes another sin easier. Each sin weaves another thread in the rope that binds us, till liberty is lost, and sin's tyranny is complete, and the sinner seems to have ceased to be master in his house of life.

The third fact of salvation which is to be brought to bear upon this third great fact of sin is not our own efforts, our own religiousness, our own doctrine, the Atonement, or the death of Christ, but the power of the life of Christ. "He redeemeth my life from destruction." How? By His life. This is the fact of salvation. It takes life to redeem life—power to resist power. Sin is a ceaseless, undying power in our life. A ceaseless, undying power must come against it. And there is only one such power in the universe—only one, which has a chance against Sin: the power of the living Christ. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." "Power to become the sons of God"—the great fact of salvation. Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

II.

The Saving Name.

The words of St. Peter are emphatic. The clause blends together two statements: (1) *There is no other name in which men can be saved,* and (2) *This is the name given in which men must be saved.*

1. Had St. Peter lived among us now, would he have put the matter in this way? Would he not have avoided any appearance

[1] D. G. Rossetti.

of comparison or rivalry between the Gospel and other religious systems? Would he not have said: "It is enough for me to proclaim that there is salvation in Christ; I do not know, I am not concerned to determine whether other prophets, other doctrines, other agencies can save. I do not wish to claim for Him any monopoly of saving power; I have no inclination to dispute the pretensions of Jewish rites or of Greek philosophies. No doubt there is much to be said for every religion in the world, and the professors of a religion have only to be sure that they are consistent; that they are careful to fashion their lives according to its law and the light of nature. It is enough for me to say that the religion of Christ will save you if you choose: I am not so illiberal as to maintain that you cannot be sure of salvation without it"? Why did not St. Peter say this? Why did he state the very converse of it—"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"? It was because he had in his heart and on his lips, not a human speculation or theory, but, as he held, the Truth—the One, Final, Absolute Truth. The proof of that to his mind, the overwhelming proof, was the life and teaching of his Master, crowned, attested, by the miracle—the recent, the certain, the unassailable miracle —of the Resurrection.

¶ We are able without confusion to associate faith in the "All-Father" with much of the picturesque and poetic beliefs of the ancient world. They, too, through the flimsy veil of grotesque mythology, looked into the heavens, and believed God to reign there, with power over human destiny, the Arbiter of fate and the Rewarder of the righteous. They, too, felt beneath the outspread beauty of the earth a living presence of God. "God is in everything you see, the world is only the shrine of His presence and the veil of His glory." So with many of the great systems of nature-worship with which we are brought into contact to-day in the march of our civilization: beneath them there is the sense of an overshadowing majesty which can be used and elevated and stripped of its superstitious adjuncts and purged from its materialism. But "I believe in Jesus Christ, God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, . . . being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things are made," is at once to bring in a different element altogether. This sad, attenuated figure, with arms outstretched upon the Cross, seems at once to drive away

the nymphs from the fountains, the dryads from the groves, and to pass like a cloud across the sun, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," crowned with thorns, not with roses; outcast, despised, rejected, crucified; at one time enwrapped in the miraculous, at another apparently overwhelmed with humanity and its capacities for suffering. At once we introduce with this Divine figure a history which is challenged at every step, a history which cannot be dissolved into poetry, or relegated into a mythology dear to the souls of those who think they can believe and disbelieve at the same time.[1]

2. If we believe in Christ only as our Teacher, although we spoke of Him as the greatest of all Teachers the world has ever had, we should stop short of the conclusion at which St. Peter arrived. If we believe this, and observe all that this belief in His teaching involves in our life and actions, it is much, but it is not enough. We must believe in Jesus not only as our Teacher and Master, but as our Saviour. May we not think that this is the very ground reason which led St. Peter to put his proposition in this form which has been called narrow and exclusive? "Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." We must be careful, while we call Christ Jesus the Teacher, not to forget that He is also our Saviour. That postulates a great truth which we cannot push aside with the Athanasian Creed. We listen to Him, it may be, as One who has said some very beautiful things and has given us some very useful advice. Jesus Christ is placed, as we may see, in a beautiful building near London, as one of the great teachers of the world, with Socrates and Confucius and Buddha and Muhammad. But it is not what Christ has taught us, but what Christ has done for us, that the Church and our Bible put before us as the object of our belief: "I believe in Jesus Christ our Saviour"—nothing short of this.

¶ The boldness of Peter and John in making this assertion appears no less amazing to us, after these centuries have passed, than it did to the men of their time. We can explain it only by the statement in verse 8, that they were "filled with the Holy Ghost." To venture on the morrow of a criminal's execution, in the city where he was executed, and before the persons who had condemned him, not only to vindicate his memory, and to assert his

[1] W. C. E. Newbolt.

innocence, but to set him forward as the headstone of the corner "the one man under heaven whereby we must be saved," argues an inspiration from God. If there had been no truth in the bold attribution, it would have been the raving of hallucination, and the world would have heard no more of it. But, as the claim has been in these nineteen centuries substantiated by many and various evidences, we may be sure that a power and knowledge more than human instructed the minds of the Apostles.[1]

¶ Did you ever notice the intolerance of God's religion? In olden times the heathen, who had different gods, all of them respected the gods of their neighbours. For instance, the king of Egypt would confess that the gods of Nineveh were true and real gods, and the prince of Babylon would acknowledge that the gods of the Philistines were true and real gods; but Jehovah, the God of Israel, put this as one of His first commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"; and He would not allow them to pay the slightest possible respect to the gods of any other nation: "Thou shalt hew them in pieces, thou shalt break down their temples, and cut down their groves." All other nations were tolerant the one of the other, but the Jew could not be so. One part of his religion was, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one": and as the consequence of his belief that there was but one God, and that that one God was Jehovah, he felt it his bounden duty to treat all other gods with contempt. Now the Christian religion, you observe, is just as intolerant as this. If you apply to a Brahmin to know the way of salvation, he will very likely tell you at once that all persons who follow out their sincere religious convictions will undoubtedly be saved. "Here," says he, "are the Muhammadans; if they obey Muhammad, and sincerely believe what he has taught, without doubt, Allah will glorify them at last." And the Brahmin turns round upon the Christian missionary, and says, "What is the use of your bringing your Christianity here to disturb us? I tell you our religion is quite capable of carrying us to heaven, if we are faithful to it." Now hear the text: how intolerant is the Christian religion! "Neither is there salvation in any other." The Brahmin may admit that there is salvation in fifty religions besides his own: but we admit no such thing. There is no true salvation out of Jesus Christ. The gods of the heathen may approach us with their mock charity, and tell us that every man may follow out his own conscientious conviction and be saved. We reply—No such thing: there is no salvation in any other; "for there is none

[1] R. F. Horton.

other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."[1]

¶ Swami Vivekananda, the hero of the Chicago parliament of religions, preaches to his fellow-countrymen the sinlessness of man: "The worst lie that you ever told yourself was that you were a sinner or a wicked man. . . . It is the greatest of all lies that we are men; we are the god of the universe." Meanwhile Krishna, the favourite god of India, is the incarnation of abandoned immorality. When some Hindus were remonstrated with for worshipping a being guilty of these shameless vices, they replied, "These are but his sports, you English have your sports, you have the railway and the steamboat and the telegraph, and no one blames you. Why should you blame Krishna for sporting in *his* way?"[2]

3. Why does St. Peter say, "There is no other *name*"? Christ Himself suggests to us the reason. When He said in His last prayer, "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me," He did not mean that He had made known simply what we call the name of God. Men already knew that. He meant rather that He had revealed the fatherly character of God, the eternal principles which the name of God represents. In modern speech a name is merely a sort of tag or label. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." In the Scriptures a name connotes something characteristic of the thing or person named. Thus Jesus helps us to the clue that leads out of all misunderstanding of the Apostle's teaching. The name of Christ is the saving name because it stands for the saving thing.

¶ The victory has been enshrined in a Name. All the power of the Nazareth victory, and of the Wilderness victory, all the power of the great climax victory of Calvary, and of the Resurrection morning—all is packed into one word, a Name, the Name of Jesus. There is far more, infinitely more, practical help and power in that Name than we have dreamed of; certainly far more than we have ever used. The Name of Jesus is the most valuable asset of the Christian life.[3]

¶ I remember a young man coming up to me at the close of a service in London. He told me how sorely he had been tempted, how he seemed to make no headway against the struggle in his Christian life, until the suggestion came to him of the

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] R. F. Horton.
[3] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks about the Tempter*, 202.

practical value of that Name above every name. Instantly he began using it, reverently, prayerfully, eagerly, and relief and victory came. And the look of eye and face revealed how real was the victory and peace that had come to him.[1]

In One NAME I have found the all in all.
It is enough, and It will never fail.
Here on the height, or there within the vale,
In this my strength I shall not greatly fall.
If on the dark hills here thy fears appal,
O thou mine Enemy! or there assail
My fainting heart, yet shall they not prevail,
For on the NAME thou dreadest I will call.
Oh then rejoice not! for I shall arise,
And heavenly light shall stream across the gloom,
And heavenly music drown the voice of doom,
And a most blissful prospect cheer mine eyes:
All from that NAME belovèd and adored,
Thy sweet great NAME, O JESUS CHRIST, my Lord.[2]

4. How shall we prove the truth of Christ's claim? We shall prove it in our life. As the Cross is the price of salvation, so, *too*, *a cross will mark the life of the Christian.* The words of Jesus are: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." Salvation from sin means power over sin, and this salvation Christ gives in His name. But the distinguishing marks of Christianity are sacrifice and struggle. A Christian will be known from a non-Christian as one who, having taken a right view of life, knows that it means a long struggle and perpetual sacrifice. Do not make the mistake of thinking that Christianity means the pale face and the lacerated body and the constant thwarting of desires. If you cannot escape into life without these sacrifices, it does so mean, but not otherwise. It means death to the lower that we may live in the higher. It means a sacrifice of much which the world values, because the Church has found something higher. It means that the soul loves to be with God better than eating the forbidden fruit. It means that the soul would rather be an outcast with Christ than be popular without Him. A Christian is one who is able to say with all his heart: "Thou art worthy . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks about the Tempter*, 203.
[2] S. J. Stone, *Poems and Hymns*, 202.

Christ's Heart was wrung for me, if mine is sore;
And if my feet are weary, His have bled;
He had no place wherein to lay His Head;
If I am burdened, He was burdened more.
The cup I drink He drank of long before;
He felt the unuttered anguish which I dread;
He hungered who the hungry thousands fed,
And thirsted who the world's refreshment bore.
If grief be such a looking-glass as shows
Christ's Face and man's in some sort made alike,
Then grief is pleasure with a subtle taste:
Wherefore should any fret or faint or haste?
Grief is not grievous to a soul that knows
Christ comes,—and listens for that hour to strike.[1]

5. And so the final thought is that this life of sacrifice is maintained by *looking unto Jesus*. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). It is "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," when "for us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and was made Man, and suffered for us." Here was at once model and motive for the Philippian saints; for Euodia, and Syntyche, and every individual and every group. Nothing short of the "mind" of the Head must be the "mind" of the member; and then the glory of the Head (so it is implied) shall be shed hereafter upon the member too: "I will grant to him to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

¶ Oh, reason of reasons, argument of arguments—the Lord Jesus Christ! Nothing in Christianity lies really outside Him. His Person and His Work embody all its dogmatic teaching. His Example, "His Love which passeth knowledge," is the sum and life of all its morality. Well has it been said that the whole Gospel message is conveyed to us sinners in those three words, "Looking unto Jesus." Is it pardon we need, is it acceptance, free as the love of God, holy as His law? We find it, we possess it, "looking unto Jesus" crucified. Is it power we need, victory and triumph over sin, capacity and willingness to witness and to suffer in a world which loves Him not at all? We find it, we possess it, it possesses us, as we "look unto Jesus" risen and reigning, for us on the Throne, with us in the soul. Is it rule and model that we want, not written on the stones of Horeb only, but "on the fleshy tables of the heart"? We find it, we receive

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

it, we yield ourselves up to it, as we "look unto Jesus" in His path of love, from the Throne to the Cross, from the Cross to the Throne, till the Spirit inscribes that law upon our inmost wills.[1]

O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede;
My heart be daily nearer Thee,
From sin be daily freed.

More of Thy glory let me see,
Thou Holy, Wise, and True;
I would Thy living image be
In joy and sorrow too.[2]

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *Philippian Studies*, 102.
[2] From the German of J. C. Lavater.

Faithful unto Death.

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Faithful unto Death.

They stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.—Acts vii. 59, 60.

When we read St. Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts we are constantly finding history presented in pictures which live in the imagination and which have been reproduced on the canvas of our great artists. This story of the martyrdom of St. Stephen is one of them. It has been regarded all through the Christian ages as a theme of never-failing and most touching interest. But it is more than this. It has been represented by Christian Art in devotional pictures more frequently perhaps than any subject not immediately connected with our blessed Lord. The few words in which St. Luke has recorded it are full of suggestiveness. In the vision, for instance, which was vouchsafed to nerve Stephen for his doom, we are told that he saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God; whereas elsewhere in Scripture our Lord is described as *sitting*. This, however, is not the posture in which we should wish to find one to whom we went for help in time of trouble and distress. It was doubtless for this reason that when the veil was drawn, Jesus was manifested to His faithful servant as standing, as One who has risen from His seat and is stretching out a helping hand to him in the crisis of his need. The Church of England has been careful to preserve this beautiful idea in one of her most beautiful Collects: "Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may steadfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of Thy first martyr, Saint Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God

to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate."

¶ One of the pictures which Tintoret conceived most rapidly and painted with passionate speed is his picture of the martyrdom of St. Stephen. It is in the great Church of St. George at Venice. Entirely ideal, it shares in the weakness which sometimes belonged to this artist's work when he was painting what was impossible. Not one of the stones which lie in hundreds round the kneeling figure of the martyr has touched him; he is absolutely unhurt. It would have suited Tintoret's character far more to have filled the air with a rain of stones, and to have sent the saint to the ground with a huge mass crashing on his shoulder. And he could have done this without erring against our sense of beauty if he had chosen. But he was ordered otherwise; and we have now from his hand *the spiritual idea of martyrdom*, not the actual reality.

The picture somewhat fails, because he wished to do it otherwise; but the kneeling figure, with clasped hands and face upturned in ecstasy—its absolute forgetfulness of the wild cries and the violence of death, its rapturous consciousness of the glory which from the throne of God above strikes upon the face—is a concentration of all the thoughts which in many ages have collected around the idea of the sacrifice of life for the love of truth conceived of as at one with the love of Christ.

But this is not all that was represented on the canvas of this thoughtful and imaginative painter. Tintoret, who knew his Bible well, knew that Stephen had won his martyrdom by bold speaking, and that though he prayed for those who slew him, he had not been patient with their blindness to good. So there is in the whole picture a sense of triumph—the triumph and advance of Christianity. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is the note. The glorious group above in Heaven is dominant. We see the future joy of the martyr in the triumph flashing from the face of Stephen, and the circle of the witnesses seated around in light seem to form an aureole round the dying figure. Not a stone touches the martyr. Nothing is fairer, nothing more victorious than his face.[1]

This is the only narrative in the New Testament of a Christian martyrdom or death. As a rule, Scripture is supremely indifferent as to what becomes of the people with whom it is for a time concerned. So long as the man is the organ of the Divine Spirit he

[1] Stopford Brooke.

is somewhat; as soon as the Spirit ceases to speak through him he drops into insignificance. So this same Acts of the Apostles kills off James the brother of John in a parenthesis; and his is the only other martyrdom that it concerns itself even so much as to mention. Why, then, this exceptional detail about the martyrdom of Stephen? For two reasons: because it is the first of a series, and the Acts of the Apostles always dilates upon the first of each set of things which it describes, and condenses the others. But more especially because, if we come to look at the story, it is not so much an account of Stephen's death as of Christ's power in Stephen's death. And the theme of this book is not the acts of the Apostles, but the acts of the risen Lord in and for His Church.

I.

Stephen's Life.

i. The Deacon.

1. Stephen was originally a Hellenistic Jew. The Hellenistic Jews were made up, partly of men of purely Gentile parentage who were proselytes to the Mosaic Law, and partly of Jews, who, by long settlement in foreign lands, had adopted the language and manners of Greek civilization. To say that a man was a Hellenist proved nothing as to his descent; but it showed that he accepted the religion of Israel, while yet he used Greek speech and followed Greek customs. Stephen's name, although Greek, does not exclude the possibility of his having been a Jew by birth; and he is said to have had a Syriac name of the same meaning.

2. Of his conversion to the Faith of Christ we know nothing; he is first mentioned when he was chosen one of the seven Deacons. The Church of Jerusalem in the earliest Apostolic age had a common fund, into which its members at their conversion threw their personal property, and out of which they were assisted according to their needs. The administration of this fund must have come to be a serious and complicated business within a few months from its establishment. And as the higher ministries of the Church were ordained, not with a view to carrying on a work of this kind, but for the conversion and sanctification

of souls, it was natural that, with the demands upon their time which the Apostles had to meet, the finance and resources of the Church should occasionally fall into confusion. So it was that, before many months had passed, "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews"—that is, of the Hellenistic against the Jewish converts—"because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." Probably these widows or their friends may have been somewhat exacting. But the Apostles felt that their time ought not to be spent in managing a bank. The Twelve, who were all in Jerusalem still, assembled the whole body of the faithful, and desired them to elect seven men "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," to be entrusted, as Deacons, with the administration of the funds of the Church. Seven persons were chosen; and at their head Stephen, described as "a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." These seven were ordained by laying on of the Apostles' hands; and the result of this arrangement was that "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the (Jewish) priests were obedient unto the faith."

3. Of St. Stephen's exertions in the organization and direction of the public charity we hear nothing; although we may be sure that this was not neglected. We are told, however, that he was "full of faith and power," and that he "did great wonders and miracles among the people." No details are given, but his miracles must not be forgotten in our estimate of the causes of his success. His chief scene of labour seems to have been in the synagogue, or group of synagogues, "of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia." The Libertines were Jews who had been taken prisoners, reduced to slavery, then enfranchised by the Roman general Pompey. Many of them had recently been banished from Rome, and would naturally have had a synagogue to themselves in Jerusalem. At least one synagogue would have belonged to African Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria; and two or three others to the Jews of Cilicia and Asia Minor. These were a very numerous class, and among them the future Apostle of the Gentiles was at this date still reckoned an enthusiastic Pharisee. It was among these Jews from abroad that Stephen opened what

we should call a mission; he had more points of contact with these men of Greek speech and habits than had the Twelve. He engaged in a series of public disputations; and although he was almost unbefriended, and represented a very unpopular cause, his opponents "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake."

4. But the victory which his opponents could not hope to win by argument, they hoped they might win by denunciation and clamour. They persuaded some false witnesses to swear that in their hearing Stephen had spoken blasphemous words against Moses and against God. They combined against him the jealousy of the upper classes and the prejudices of the lower; and they brought him, on trial for blasphemy, before the highest Jewish court—the Sanhedrin.

ii. Before the Sanhedrin.

1. "And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (vi. 15). There is one question which we all want to have answered, and it is this: *How came Stephen to be thus self-possessed before the frowning Sanhedrin*—fearless before an excited multitude in his home-thrusts of truth, brave in the crisis of trial, forgiving at the moment of death? Men are not born thus. As we mentally put ourselves into his circumstances, and try to realize each rapidly succeeding danger, our hearts fail within us, and we feel that no physical courage, no hardihood of mere natural bravery, could sustain us here. There must have come some supernatural change upon him, to have induced at once this undaunted fortitude and this superhuman tenderness of love. Was it a miraculous bestowment, limited in its conferment to the first ages, and to some specially selected and specially missioned men? or is it within the reach and enjoyment of believers in Jesus now? These are questions which are interesting to us, as we dwell upon the developments of holy character presented in the life of Stephen.

2. How are we to account for this boldness? The secret of all the heroism and of all the loveliness is in the delineation of the man. "*He was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.*"

He did not leap into this perfect balance of character in a moment—springing at once full-armed, as Minerva is fabled to have sprung from the brain of Jupiter. There was no mystic charm by which the graces clustered round him; he had no mystery of soul-growth—no patented elixir of immortal ripening which was denied to others less favoured. He had faith; it was the gift of God to him, just as it is the gift of God to us. He had the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; which has been purchased for us in like manner by the blood-shedding of our Surety. The only difference between ourselves and him is that he claimed the blessings with a holier boldness, and lived habitually in the nearer communion with God. There is no bar to our own entrance into this fulness of privilege; the treasury is not exhausted; the Benefactor is not less willing to bestow. His ear listens to any prayer for the increase of faith. He waits to shed forth the richer baptisms of the Holy Ghost upon all those who ask Him for the boon.

3. It is not then in physical endowment that we are to find the source of this moral courage. Some of the men who could lead the van of armies in the field—who could fix the scaling-ladder against the parapet and be the first to scale the wall—who could climb the rugged slope that was swept by the bristling cannon—have displayed the most utter cowardice when a moral duty has been difficult, when some untoward disaster has surprised them, or when they have had to maintain the right against the laugh of the scorner. Sometimes, indeed, those who have been physically timid, and who have shuddered sensitively at the first imagined danger, have been uplifted into the bravery of confessorship when the agonizing trial came.

¶ The Sister knew that the whole place was given over to evil purposes. She knew that no help would be given from inside. In case of violence it would be necessary for her to descend to the streets. She was not afraid, but she was conscious of apprehension and a vague alarm. However many policemen may walk the streets outside, it is no easy matter for a woman to face one of these pandars in the seclusion of his own establishment. But Sister Mildred is a saint, and there is no courage like the courage of the saint.[1]

[1] Harold Begbie, *In the Hand of the Potter*, 188.

¶ It is related that in the Duke of Wellington's campaigns two officers were once despatched upon a service of considerable danger. As they were riding together, the one observed the other to be greatly agitated, with blanched cheek and quivering lip, and limbs shaken as with a paralysis of mortal fear. Reining his steed upon its haunches, he haughtily addressed him, "Why, you are afraid." "I am," was the reply; "and if you were half as much afraid as I am, you would relinquish the duty altogether." Without wasting another word upon his ignoble companion, the officer galloped back to headquarters, and complained bitterly that he had been ordered to march in the companionship of a coward. "Off, sir, to your duty," was the commander's sharp reply, "or the coward will have done the business before you get there."[1]

II.

Stephen's Prayers.

1. The two dying prayers of Stephen carry us back in thought to the prayers of our Lord at His crucifixion.

(1) "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*"—We are told in the sacred narrative that St. Stephen "kneeled down" while they were in the act of stoning him. The picture fills us with amazement. It is so unlike what we should have expected, that some have attempted to persuade us that this was not a voluntary or deliberate act of the martyr. We are not, it is said, to understand that it expresses the purpose of one who was resolved, despite all the violence to which he was subjected, to spend his last moments in a posture of calm resignation and prayer; that would have been next to impossible for any human being to do under such circumstances. He had no alternative; "another crash of stones brought him upon his knees." But the Christian conscience will not readily consent to have such a beautiful feature in the scene explained away. It shows us the dying martyr gathering up his failing strength and all the energy of his expiring life for one last, one crowning act of homage to his Lord; and a record of it stands on the sacred page, to teach us what the greatest saints have felt about the value of external forms or bodily postures in expressing the worship that is due from the creature to the Creator. Then let us hear his prayer:

[1] W. M. Punshon.

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." What an echo it is of his Master's dying words!—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Not the slightest thought of vengeance in the prayer, but an unreserved entreaty that their sins may never be remembered against them.

¶ A generous prayer is never presented in vain; the petition may be refused, but the petitioner is always, I believe, rewarded by some gracious visitation.[1]

I saw an angry crowd
Gathered about a youth, that loud
  Were crying: Slay him, slay,
  And stoned him as he lay.
I saw him overborne by death,
That bowed him to the earth beneath:
  Only he made his eyes
  Gates to behold the skies,
To his high Lord his prayer outpouring,
Forgiveness for his foes imploring:
  Even in that pass his face
  For pity making place.[2]

(2) "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*"—We need not dwell now upon the fact that here we have a distinct instance of prayer to Jesus Christ, a distinct recognition, in the early days of His Church, of the highest conception of His person and nature, so that a dying man turns to Him, and commits his soul into His hands. Passing this by, though not overlooking it, let us think of the resemblance, and the difference, between this entrusting of the spirit by Stephen to his Lord, and the committing of His spirit to the Father by His dying Son. Christ on the Cross speaks to God; Stephen, on his Calvary, speaks to Jesus Christ. Christ, on the Cross, says, "I commit." Stephen says, "Receive," or rather, "Take." The one phrase carries in it something of the notion that our Lord died not because He must, but because He would; that He was active in His death; that He chose to summon death to do its work upon Him; that He "yielded up his spirit," as one of the Evangelists has it, pregnantly and significantly. But Stephen says, "Take!" as knowing that it must be his Lord's power that should draw his spirit out of the coil of horror around

[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Merry Men.*

[2] Dante, *Purg.* xv. 106–114, trans. by Dr. Shadwell.

him. So the one dying word has strangely compacted in it authority and submission; and the other dying word is the word of a simple waiting servant.

2. How was Stephen strengthened for the trial? What were the manifestations granted to him, and which sustained him through the bitterness of martyrdom? You find these recorded in the preceding part of the chapter: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." We may not pretend to explain what Stephen saw in seeing the glory of God. We can only suppose that, as with St. Paul caught up to the third heaven, it was not what human speech could express, for it is very observable that when he asserts what he saw he makes no mention of "the glory of God," but confines himself to the opening of the heavens, and the manifestation of Christ at the right hand of the Father. It is not for us to speculate where the martyr is silent. We can only suppose that "the glory of God" that was shown to him was some special display of the Divine presence calculated to reassure the sufferer.

To stretch my hand and touch Him,
Though He be far away;
To raise my eyes and see Him
Through darkness as through day;
To lift my voice and call Him—
This is to pray!

To feel a hand extended
By One who standeth near;
To view the love that shineth
In eyes serene and clear;
To know that He is calling—
This is to hear!

3. The supreme thought which these prayers suggest is the great possibilities that lie in faith in Christ. We see the soul of the suffering disciple leaning on the Lord who had suffered. We see that the secret of strength in all trials lies in appealing to the love and power of the blessed Jesus. In the death-struggle St. Stephen had faith to hang upon his Lord, and his Lord bore him through the agonies of that hour. This is what we are most

likely to think of in reading of the martyr's death. But was this the greatest proof of St. Stephen's faith? Was his greatest trial in this world? Did it not lie beyond this world? The life was nearly crushed out of him. The pains of death were coming thick and fast upon him. But was death the end? What was awaiting him after death? He was entering on the unseen state. All was dim, unknown, untried before him. And if his spirit passed away, to whom would it go? It must return to God, who gave it. It must go before God, meet Him, and give up its account to Him. It is such thoughts as these which add so wonderful a power and force to those words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I know not where I go; all nature seems to open out into vast untried depths beneath me; take me, hold me in Thine everlasting arms; I am safe with Thee. I know not who may attack me, how the powers of evil may gather against me; take me, guard me. I know not how to meet the Judgment. I know only that I have been dear to Thee in this life. Thou hast loved me, died for me, kept me. Take me now; to Thee do I commit my cause; "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Here is indeed a strange, calm faith in the power of our blessed Lord to keep and bless the soul in that unseen world. One who could speak thus must have felt that our Lord had conquered in that world, as in this, and emptied it of its horrors. He looked, as it were, through the mist and darkness that was gathering around him; he pierced with the steady gaze of his mind through the veil that was drawn between him and the state on which he was entering, and there he saw his Lord waiting and ready for him. Or rather, with a surer faith, though he did not see, he felt certain that the Lord was King in that realm of the departed, and he was ready to pass into it, because he knew that the Lord had power to keep and uphold him there. It may be that we shall never know the full force of those calm words of St. Stephen till we are on the edge of that unseen world ourselves.

4. His faith was faith in Christ, in the crucified Lord Jesus Christ. Observe the words of the prayers. While they stoned Stephen St. Luke says, according to the Authorized Version, that he was "calling upon God." In the original text the Person upon whom he called is not named. The Authorized Version has

supplied what seemed to be wanting, "God," intimating that it was the First Person of the Trinity. But the last Revisers have substituted "The Lord," to indicate that it was the Second Person: and this is certainly more in accordance with the prayer that follows: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

¶ The Revisers were anticipated in their interpretation by Bishop Cosin, who, in view of perpetuating another characteristic feature of St. Stephen's martyrdom, has addressed his Collect to God the Son. With very rare exceptions (there are three others only in our Prayer Book) Liturgical Collects have always been addressed to the Father, because they form part of an office in which the Son joins with the Church in presenting to the Father the Memorial of His own Sacrifice. It seems, therefore, to introduce an incongruity to appeal at such a time to Him who is acting as Priest. It was for this reason that certain of the Early Councils directed that "when we are officiating at the altar, prayer should always be addressed to the Father."[1]

5. And now, one great lesson rises out of all that has been said. If God has given us but little clear knowledge of the state of the departed, if we have been obliged to guess at what passes in that state, and are not able to speak with absolute certainty, one thing at least is clear and certain. *Every hope of the soul as it passes from the body centres in our blessed Lord.* So then, if He is to be our hope and stay after death, He must be our hope and stay now. We must live in close, earnest, true communion with Him. We must live with Him as our Friend and Guide, our heart's inmost life. If we wish to feel that we can commit ourselves to Him, and lean upon Him, when our spirits shall have to venture forth at His call into the dim, uncertain, untried world beyond the grave, then we must familiarize ourselves now with His love, His power, His gifts, His might. If we hope to say with the calm, undoubting trust of St. Stephen, at that last moment, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," then we must learn such trust beforehand by commending our spirits to Him now.

Beloved, yield thy time to God, for He
Will make eternity thy recompense;
Give all thy substance for His Love, and be
Beatified past earth's experience.

[1] H. M. Luckock.

Serve Him in bonds, until He set thee free;
  Serve Him in dust, until He lift thee thence;
Till death be swallowed up in victory
  When the great trumpet sounds to bid thee hence.
Shall setting day win day that will not set?
  Poor price wert thou to spend thyself for Christ,
  Had not His wealth thy poverty sufficed:
  Yet since He makes His garden of thy clod,
Water thy lily, rose, or violet,
  And offer up thy sweetness unto God.[1]

III.

Stephen's Death.

1. "They stoned Stephen." Our ordinary English idea of the manner of the Jewish punishment of stoning is a very inadequate and mistaken one. It did not consist merely in a miscellaneous rabble throwing stones at the criminal, but there was a solemn and appointed method of execution which is preserved for us in detail in the Rabbinical books. And from it we gather that the *modus operandi* was this. The blasphemer was taken to a certain precipitous rock, the height of which was prescribed as being equal to that of two men. The witnesses by whose testimony he had been condemned had to cast him over, and if he survived the fall it was their task to roll upon him a great stone, of which the weight is prescribed in the Talmud as being as much as two men could lift. If he lived after that, then others took part in the punishment.

2. "And when he had said this, he fell asleep." How absolute the triumph over the last enemy which these words express! When men court slumber, they banish from their hearts all causes of anxiety, and from their dwelling all tumult of sound; they demand quiet as a necessity; they exclude the light and draw the curtains close; they carefully put away from them all that will have a tendency to defeat, or to postpone the object after which they aim. But Stephen fell asleep under very different circumstances from these. Brutal oaths, and frantic yells, and curses loud and deep, were the lullaby which sang

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

him to his dreamless slumbers; and while all were agitated and tumultuous around him,

> Meek as an infant to its mother's breast,
> So turned he, longing, for immortal rest.

The evident meaning of the words is that death came to him simply as a release from suffering—as a curse from which the sting was drawn—so mitigated in its bitterness, that it was as harmless and as refreshing as sleep.

¶ The image of sleep as a euphemism for death is no peculiar property of Christianity, but the ideas that it suggests to the Christian consciousness *are* the peculiar property of Christianity. Any of you that ever were in the Vatican will remember how you go down corridors with Pagan marbles on that side and Christian ones on this. Against one wall, in long rows, stand the sad memorials, each of which has the despairing ending, "Farewell, farewell, for ever farewell." But on the other side there are carved no goddesses of slumber, or mourning genii, or quenched lamps, or wailing words, but sweet emblems of a renewed life, and the ever-recurring, gracious motto: "In hope." To the non-Christian that sleep is eternal; to the Christian that sleep is as sure of a waking as is the sleep of the body. The one affects the whole man; the Christian sleep affects only the body and the connexion with the outer world.[1]

> There is none other thing expressed,
> But long disquiet merged in rest.

¶ "He fell asleep." Repose, safety, restoration—these are the ideas of comfort which are held in the expression of the text. Take them, and rejoice in the majestic hopes which they inspire. Christ has died. He, dying, drew the sting from death; and, properly speaking, there has been no death of a believer since that day. What says the Scripture? "He that believeth on Jesus, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die." What fulness of consolation to those who are mourning for others—to those who are dying themselves! With the banner of this hope in hand, the believer may return with a full heart from the grave of his best beloved, "giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and may march calmly down to the meeting of his own mortal foe.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren, *Last Sheaves*, 248.

[2] W. M. Punshon.

Sleep, little flower, whose petals fade and fall
Over the sunless ground;
Ring no more peals of perfume on the air—
Sleep long and sound.
Sleep—sleep.

Sleep, summer wind, whose breathing grows more faint
As night draws slowly nigh;
Cease thy sweet chanting in the cloistral woods
And seem to die.
Sleep—sleep.

Sleep, thou great Ocean, whose wild waters sink
Under the setting sun;
Hush the loud music of thy warring waves
Till night is done.
Sleep—sleep.

Sleep, thou tired heart, whose mountain pulses droop
Within the valley cold:
On pains and pleasures, fears and hopes of life,
Let go thine hold.
Sleep—sleep.

Sleep, for 'tis only sleep, and there shall be
New life for all, at day;
So sleep, sleep all, until the restful night
Has passed away.
Sleep—sleep.[1]

IV.

The Result of Stephen's Martyrdom.

Such was the first martyrdom. How soon did the martyr's blood become the seed of the Church! He had met his death for declaring the universality of God's Kingdom, that Christianity was destined to spread the blessing of salvation far beyond the Jewish race, even over the whole world; and his dying prayer was answered by the conversion of one, who, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, helped most to preach the Gospel to "every creature which is under heaven." St. Augustine said, "If Stephen had not prayed, Paul would never have been given to the Church" (Sermo cccIxxxii., *De sancto Stephano*). It is true the answer was delayed. There are some, however, who believe that the effect was immediate,

[1] S. J. Stone, *Lullaby of Life.*

and that the wild fury of the persecutor, which broke out with such violence, was only a desperate attempt to stifle the convictions which arose in his mind. Painters have caught up this idea and expressed it by the strongest contrast between Saul's face and the faces of the others who witnessed the end. It may have been so; it may be that a foregleam of the coming dawn did touch him even then; but whether it came at once or only in after days, no one will think of denying that there is an eternal link between the martyr's prayer and the Apostle's conversion.

¶ Why was it that in the ten years after Livingstone's death, Africa made greater advancement than in the previous ten centuries? All the world knows that it was through the vicarious suffering of one of Scotland's noblest heroes.

¶ Why is Italy cleansed of the plagues that devastated her cities a hundred years ago? Because John Howard sailed in an infected ship from Constantinople to Venice, that he might be put into a lazaretto and find out the clue to that awful mystery of the plague and stay its power. How has it come that the merchants of our western ports send ships laden with implements for the fields and conveniences for the house into the South Sea Islands? Because such men as Patteson, the pure-hearted gallant boy of Eton College, gave up every prospect in England to labour amid the Pacific savages and twice plunged into the waters of the coral reefs, amid sharks and devil-fish and stinging jellies, to escape the flight of poisoned arrows of which the slightest graze meant horrible death, and in that high service died by the clubs of the very savages whom he had often risked his life to save—the memory of whose life did so smite the consciences of his murderers that they laid "the young martyr in an open boat, to float away over the bright blue waves, with his hands crossed, as if in prayer, and a palm branch on his breast." And there, in the white light, he lies now, immortal for ever.[1]

A patient minister was he,
A simple saint of God,
A soul that might no longer be
Bound to this earthly clod;
A spirit that sought for the purer breath
Of the land of life, through the gates of death,—
The path all martyrs trod,
That lies through the night of a speechless shame,
And leads to the light of a deathless fame.

[1] N. D. Hillis, *The Investment of Influence*, 79.

Stoned to his death by those for whom
His soul's last prayer was sped
Unto his God, "Avert the doom
That gathers o'er their head";
And the stones that bruised him and struck him down
Shone dazzling gems in his victor's crown;
And as his spirit fled,
A light from the land where the angels dwell
Lingered saintly and grand where the martyr fell.

'Tis but a history in these days—
The cruel and final test
Of those who went life's rugged ways
For faith they had confessed;
Yet the God who spake to the saints of old
Lacks not to-day in His mystic fold
Doers of His behest:
There are servants of men and saints of God
Who will follow, as then, where the Master trod.[1]

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 45.

Why Persecutest Thou Me?

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Why Persecutest Thou Me?

And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?—Acts ix. 4.

1. We do well to treasure up, whenever we can learn them, the facts that cluster round the turning-points in a great man's life; the great critical moments which made him what he was, for good and evil, leaving an everlasting impress on his character. In proportion to the work which such a man has done in the world, as prophet, or lawgiver, or ruler, are we glad to know what were the inner sources of those great achievements; what forces were at work, directing, in the wonderful providence of God, the whole current of his being. The thoughts which rise unbidden in his heart; the words which are borne to his inward ear as from some human or Divine instructor; the account he himself gives us of the facts of the great change—all these have an interest for us far greater than that which attaches to any record of merely outward events, even than that which we find in the greatest actions of the man himself.

Looking to St. Paul as simply one of the great men who have stamped their minds and characters on the history of the world; seeing in him one whose influence has had a wider range, and lasted longer than that of any other man, however mighty or famous, the account which he gives of the process by which he became that which he actually was, might well attract us, as being of immense significance. The process was one of sudden and startling change; all the strength and intensity of his nature were transferred in a moment from one camp in the great battle-field of faith to the other; he who was before "a persecutor and a blasphemer, and injurious," became a preacher of the faith he once destroyed. If the record of the conversion of St. Paul were simply that of an internal conflict, of growing and gathering convictions, of strange dreams and omens; if it were as per-

plexing and uncertain as are the stories of the conversion of Constantine, it would still be, for all to whom the history of the world is not a sealed book, a page in it which they may not lightly pass over. But if we believe that the change of belief and heart was not merely a human, but a Divine work; that the words which belong to it did not come by chance, but were spoken to his spirit by Him who is the Eternal Word; if we think of that which he beheld, not as one of the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, but as the revelation of the Son of man, then we are bound to study the whole history with a profounder reverence, and to examine into each single circumstance belonging to it, with the fullest conviction that there can be nothing idle or superfluous in it, nothing arbitrary or capricious.

> Give thanks for heroes that have stirred
> Earth with the wonder of a word.
> But all thanksgiving for the breed
> Who have bent destiny with deed—
> Souls of the high, heroic birth,
> Souls sent to poise the shaken earth,
> And then called back to God again
> To make heaven possible for men.

2. The subject before us is St. Paul's conversion. Before approaching the particular study of it let us give a thought to the meaning of a much misused word. Perhaps no term in theology has been more seriously misapplied than this word "conversion"; the place which it has filled in religious thought, and the interpretations which have been forced out of it by preachers within the last century, have tended to make us revert from the word altogether, as one having no use for modern times. But, while we try to avoid the errors, let us not be afraid of the word. "Conversion," if used in its true sense, does not mean some abnormal experience in the spiritual life of a man; far from this, it is a natural experience in the history of the religious life of every soul which seeks after God; an experience which not only enters into that life, but makes a permanent impression upon the character of the soul.

(1) First of all it is a crisis in a man's experience. Nothing interests men more than the story of a critical and determining experience in the history of a soul. All the narratives that have

deeply affected mankind have turned upon some crisis in spiritual fortunes. The interest of the crisis may have lain in tracing the chain of outward circumstances which prepared or seemed to prepare for it. Or it may, on the other hand, have lain solely in a close scrutiny of the gradual and hardly perceptible inner movements which led to that moment big with change and renewal. But without that moment the story would have been hardly a human story at all. So naturally do we look for the great transforming moment in a life which is to satisfy us of its real humanity. So little can we accept as really human the life which unconsciously and without an effort accepts itself, which has never needed to challenge itself and to wring from itself the satisfying and renewing answer to its own insistent questioning. *It is this moment of self-challenge which is really the conversion of a soul.* There the life comes to itself, feels that there is a self after which it must seek, which will not simply come to it without seeking, that there is a self which it must make, which will not fall to it ready-made.

¶ I read in the newspaper the other day of a wonderful invention to be used in war. It was a *bomb*, with such materials inside the shell, and so contrived as to explode at the touch *of a ray of light*! The bomb might be placed anywhere and do no harm; but let a ray of light fall upon it in particular, and on the instant, at the summons of the light, the thing would awake and burst.[1]

(2) But, in the second place, this crisis is *a part of the soul's own growth.* Conversion is a universal human need. But we have confused ourselves by confining the term to a particular kind of religious experience which is by no means common to all men, or even possible for all men, which is indeed, and perhaps fortunately, possible only for a few exceptional natures. And it is just this kind of conversion which is very often least worthy of the name. It is the effect of a momentary emotion, and is induced most readily in the most superficial natures. It is true that the appeals which produce such an emotion may sometimes find their way into the deep and silent nature and there leave the permanent lesson which will continue to do its work while life endures. But they are too often addressed to all that is most obviously of the

[1] John A. Hutton, *Guidance from Robert Browning in Matters of Faith*, 47.

surface stuff of feeling. Too often they are so ignorant of the nature of the will in us and of the means of stirring it into action that it seems almost an accident if occasionally they do reach it. The secret of conversion lies in the character to which the appeal is addressed, and not in some conventional type of religious appeal. It is the inner history that matters. And nothing is of such slow growth as the trouble of the heart, the dissatisfaction with self. To force it is almost certainly to mar its efficaciousness, to rob it of its true value. Appeals from without may awaken it into activity for the first time, or they may bring it to a head and give it complete consciousness of itself. But it is in its slow working that the Spirit of God is wrestling with a soul. It is not in the message of a moment, but in the gradual lesson of an obscure and laborious effort, that the Divine Spirit comes to us. And yet that moment must not be denied its place in the spiritual life. It appears and reappears in the history of great souls.

¶ This is the story of one of those profoundly significant events in history on which the whole complexion of future thought and the course of future progress turn. St. Paul is one of those Titanic figures of the past about whom everything was on the large scale, both for himself and for the world. Intellectually, his views of truth have become a fundamental statement of the creed of nineteen centuries; practically, he is the master empire-builder of the kingdom of God in the world. He laid hold upon the largest conceptions of his time—the Hebrew religion and the Roman Empire—and he transformed them into the Christian Church. But it was not by the natural development of his genius that he did this. Up to a certain moment in his career his powers were running to waste, spending themselves in the most futile ways. At that moment something occurred which revolutionized his whole life, an upheaval of the very foundations of the man. But the greatness of this man's nature ensured the thoroughness of the change in him. Such a man's conversion is a tremendous affair.[1]

¶ We may well question whether there was ever a conversion which could be rightly called instantaneous. There is often a sudden shock, a flash of light, a conscience smitten as with an arrow, a deciding moment; but hundreds of forgotten things have been preparing for it. That blaze of lightning which bursts out of a thunder-cloud is instantaneous, but the atmospheric conditions which prepared it have been a long time gathering to form that

[1] J. Kelman.

thunder-cloud. Conversion, when it is most sudden, has behind it days and even years of passing religious thought, and conscience-pricking, and spirit-striving. It is only when the hands are on the hour that the clock strikes, but through the whole sixty minutes the whole machinery has been moving towards this very thing. The clock struck in this case on the way to Damascus, but the wheels had been going round a long time bringing it to this point. Christ's unseen hand had been laid upon Saul more than once, and he had felt it and shaken it off, half in fear and half in anger.[1]

I was quick in the flesh, was warm, and the live heart shook my breast;
In the market I bought and sold, in the temple I bowed my head.
I had swathed me in shows and forms, and was honoured above the rest,
For the sake of the life I lived; nor did any esteem me dead.

But at last, when the hour was ripe—was it sudden-remembered word?
Was it sight of a bird that mounted, or sound of a strain that stole?—
I was 'ware of a spell that snapped, of an inward strength that stirred,
Of a Presence that filled that place; and it shone, and I knew my soul.

And the dream I had called my life was a garment about my feet,
For the web of the years was rent with the throe of a yearning strong,
With a sweep as of winds in heaven, with a rush as of flames that meet,
The Flesh and the Spirit clasped; and I cried, "Was I dead so long?"

I had glimpse of the Secret, flashed through the symbol obscure and mean,
And I felt as a fire what erst I repeated with lips of clay:
And I knew for the things eternal the things eye hath not seen;
Yea, the heavens and the earth shall pass, but they never shall pass away.[2]

[1] J. G. Greenhough. [2] Helen Gray Cone.

I.

The Preparation.

1. It is worth our while in the first place to inquire into the events which led up to the change. For it is evident that it was sudden only in its climax, as we may gather even from the words "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (verse 5). This inference is borne out by the altogether excessive zeal of the voluntary inquisitor. When we think what humble folk these early Christians were—slaves, women who earned their livelihood by trade, odds and ends of the below-stairs life of the great Empire—and when we remember how Saul rushed from house to house after them, and how everything was at its harshest and most violent, we can see the unnaturalness of it all. No one likes this sort of work for its own sake, and this fiery crusade, self-imposed, is certainly suspicious.

> Who lights the faggot?
> Not the full faith; no, but the lurking doubt.

On the other hand, we know from himself that he had already been arrested by the discovery of the sinfulness of coveting, and the inward nature of morality. Pharisaic Judaism could do nothing to help him in that, but it was a first principle of Jesus' teaching. And there was much else in the new faith that must have strongly attracted him. The character of Jesus, and of His followers, was after all inexplicably beautiful, whatever one might think about their principles. Those women with the Madonna-like faces, those young men whose eyes were full of spiritual light—undoubtedly they had some secret of gladness and serenity hidden from the ancient world. Thus he was already more or less consciously dissatisfied with Judaism and tempted towards Christianity.

Yet such a change meant too much for him to make it possible that he should lightly capitulate. On the one hand, it was unthinkable to his proud spirit that simple people like the Christians had been right, while he and all thinkers whom he respected had been wrong. And then, if by any chance it should be true, the ghastly alternative was that he and his friends had seen their

own Messiah, and crucified Him. No wonder that he felt "the anguish of a constant misgiving." It was the clash of two consciences within him. It was impossible to go on for long with this hunting of such small and defenceless game without a pang; and yet a sorer pang threatened him if for a moment he admitted the possibility of his nation's crime, and the falsehood of her fixed convictions.

It was characteristic of the man to seek to settle the conflict by a blind and furious dash for one side. But the journey gave him much enforced leisure when he was not in a mood that could bear to be still. Whatever route he chose, he could not escape daily memories of Jesus and His doings. He was no longer backed by public opinion, and the solitary ride only gave freer course to his uncertain thoughts. By the time he had drawn near to Damascus, he must have been growing feverish. No Eastern travels at high noon except upon compulsion. Then in the still hot air, while the merciless sun beat on him and his unwilling and sullen companions, the city burst upon his view.

2. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." In our land we rarely see oxen yoked to the plough. Obedient horses do that work in our fields. But in the lands of the Bible, oxen were employed in the task, and they did not take kindly to it until they were broken in. They were often in rebellious mood, and flung their heels back in angry protest against the beam or shaft of the ploughshare. They stood and kicked instead of moving on. To stop this a somewhat cruel device was used. The beam was faced with small, sharp iron spikes, and when those rebellious limbs of theirs were flung furiously back it was only to have them pricked and sorely wounded. The most stubborn oxen speedily got tired of that self-inflicted torture; settled down to the yoke and the labour, and submissively went whither the ploughman drove. It is a curious figure to apply to a man, but distinctly forcible; and this was the figure which our glorified Lord used to that haughty and headstrong man, Saul of Tarsus. Here he was, entrusted with a most important mission, armed with letters and credentials from the most imposing authorities in his nation, lifted up with the intoxication of rage and assurance, resolved to destroy at a blow this new pernicious sect of Christians which had sprung

up, and doubtless expecting to win great glory in doing it. And Christ appeared and knocked down his pride with this little word: told him that he was like one of those stupid oxen which, in refusing to do what they were ordered to do, only inflicted suffering upon themselves. Now, how did the figure apply to him? What was the resemblance between this man, driving forward on his mission of persecution, and the ox refusing to be driven, and wounding himself in sheer wrath and obstinacy? Saul understood it quickly. It meant that God had laid hold of him and yoked him to higher service, and that all this furious zeal against Jesus and the saints was just an effort to escape the yoke, to resist the power that was driving him, an effort which was bound to fail, for like the oxen he was bound to go submissively when he had abandoned kicking against the pricks. Yes, he was already yoked. A Master's hand was upon him, and he was trying to fling it off and could not.

3. It has been said that the martyrdom of Stephen converted Saul. That is overstating it; but the blood-drops of that sufferer were the seed-grain of Saul's changed life. He had heard the courageous testimony, watched and seen the face which in its dying agony was as the face of an angel; seen with what absolute fearlessness a Christian could suffer and die. It had preached to him through his obstinately closed ears; it had pricked his heart and left a sense of pain. He had crushed it down many a time, but it rose again. It was like a fire that still burned and would not be quenched. It grew fiercer, indeed, the more he tried to quench it. He fanned his hatred against the Christian sect; he followed them, hunted them, laid fierce hands upon them, dragged them off to prison, got them scourged and stoned and slain. What of that? It only brought him face to face with them. Through every one of them Christ spoke and pleaded. He saw their patient heroism, serenity in suffering, cheerfulness in dying. He could not help asking himself the secret of it. What was it that nerved and inspired these men? There was something here which he had never found in his own orthodox Pharisaism, and what was it? Could Christ be true? Was the Nazarene, indeed, the Son of God? and in slaying these people was he murdering the saints of God? Such thoughts as these had searched the

heart of Saul of Tarsus, and *it was face to face with himself* that he was prepared for the vision of the Son of God.

¶ We can be born thus more than once; and each birth brings us a little nearer to our God. But most of us are content to wait till an event, charged with almost irresistible radiance, intrudes itself violently upon our darkness, and enlightens us, in our own despite. We await I know not what happy coincidence, when it may so come about that the eyes of our soul shall be open at the very moment that something extraordinary takes place. But in everything that happens there is light; and the greatness of the greatest men has but consisted in that they had trained their eyes to be open to every ray of this light.[1]

II.

The Vision.

1. We do not know the precise spot where the vision occurred, but tradition localizes it at Salahijeh, an outer spur of the Lebanon range, at the foot of huge limestone cliffs, where the traveller first catches sight of the boundless plain and the magnificent city of Damascus set in the midst of it. One moment the famished eye sees on every side nothing but the grey aridity of limestone rock, without a leaf to enliven it; and the next it gazes enraptured upon an ocean of infinitely varied foliage. For hours Saul had been passing through the dreariest mountain scenery, whose sterile crags, bleaching in the hot sunshine, fatigued body and mind; and now all at once there rushed upon his vision, prepared for it, as it were, by the obliteration of even the memory of any green thing, a scene so strangely fair that it seemed as if a new and radiant world had opened up before him—the world-old city of Damascus, embosomed in the brightest verdure and bloom, a pearl surrounded by emeralds, the "eye of all the East." It pleases us to think that, with a poetic fitness, this was the place where Saul and his escort of soldiers were arrested by the supernatural vision.

2. The zealot of the Law, all the more a zealot because it can no longer satisfy him, is on his way to persecute the truth for which his soul is longing. There is something terrifying and

[1] Maurice Maeterlinck.

terribly pathetic in the tumult of a soul which draws near the accomplishment of such an infamy, the infamy of a loyalty which is the supreme disloyalty. It was in the exhaustion of such a tumult that the lightning which rent the Syrian sky rent also once and for all the heart of St. Paul, and revealed to him the very face of the Saviour for whom he longed. It was through the thunder of the sudden midday storm that the authentic voice of Jesus reached him at last. How often he had heard it since that day of Stephen's death, only to put it away from him as an impossible delusion. Now through the tumult without and within it strikes quite clear and definite. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" That was the very question which had haunted him ever since, in an act of fierce determination, he had sought out the high priests and obtained their warrant and ridden immediately through the Damascus gate. And the whole drama of hesitation repeats itself again in a flash in his soul. "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!" "What wilt thou have me to do?" But at last there is peace, deliverance from the conflict of the past, an end to that stage of the conflict. The soul blinded with excess of light has found its true Master and yields itself henceforth to His direction.

3. Was Saul deceived? Was he the subject of hallucination? Was he so exhausted with the fatigues of the journey, which must have occupied five or six days, as to mistake the flaming of a torch, or the noontide splendour of an Oriental sun, for a supernatural revelation? A modern conclusion of a sceptical philosopher is that he was the subject of an epileptic fit! The suggestion is scarcely worthy of any serious notice. Those who suffer from this complaint are, for the time, unconscious, and on their recovery cannot recall anything that happened while the seizure lasted. Dazzled into blindness by the overpowering effulgence of the light, Saul of Tarsus continued in a state of misery for three days, but never lost consciousness, and could remember the minutest detail of what happened during those days of spiritual as well as physical darkness. Such a foolish hypothesis as the theory of epilepsy is an amusing specimen of the absurd lengths to which rationalistic speculation will go in its attempt to eliminate the supernatural element from the Bible. It is

impossible to account for this event satisfactorily without admitting it to be a miraculous manifestation.

What's that which, ere I spake, was gone?
So joyful and intense a spark
That, whilst o'erhead the wonder shone,
The day, before but dull, grew dark?
I do not know; but this I know,
That, had the splendour lived a year,
The truth that I some heavenly show
Did see, could not be now more clear.
This know I too: might mortal breath
Express the passion then inspired,
Evil would die a natural death,
And nothing transient be desired:
And error from the soul would pass,
And leave the senses pure and strong
As sunbeams. But the best, alas,
Has neither memory nor tongue.[1]

4. From the moment when Saul saw Jesus, his life became a transformed one. Such a transformation in itself bears witness to the reality of the heavenly vision, and all the more so because the struggle was not finished in that one stupendous moment. If the transformation had resulted from hallucination we might allow the possibility of the sudden change, but that the effect should be permanent and abiding, worked out with infinite patience in a life's struggle, is incredible. We have only to read the seventh chapter of Romans to be convinced that St. Paul's conquest which began at this moment was a real and abiding one.

5. There is yet another point. Here we have an illustration of the way in which the best and most can be made of a man. This man has no sooner been appealed to, no sooner has he seen that He whom he thought was an evil impostor is really the Lord of glory, he has no sooner recognized Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead, and clothed in power and majesty, than he calls Him "Lord"; and the cry of the newly won life, of the newly subdued heart, is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And out from that as from a fountain comes the life of splendid devotion, of brave endurance, of glorious attempt, and even yet more glorious

[1] Coventry Patmore.

victory for the Lord Jesus. And is not St. Paul influencing the whole civilized world to-day?

Ofttimes when the days are bitter, and the pulse of life is low,
And the wheels of toil in their dusty course drive heavily and slow,
When the meaning of all is blurred, and the joy of seeking palls,
Ofttimes in my desert places a miracle befalls.
Is it a trick o' the blood, a clearing dot in the brain?
Sudden the far-off shower unguessed has filled the choking stream;
Some rift in the grey horizon let through a crimson beam.
Once more for me the sky is blue; I quaff the wine of the air,
And taste the fierce tang of the sea, and find the wild rose fair;
Once more I walk the allotted round with unreluctant feet,
And daily bread has savour, and love and labour are sweet.

Oh, once in centuries olden, before Damascus Gate,
Journeyed one with holden eyes and a dreary heart of hate;
When a glory shone round about him, and in one wondrous hour
He had passed from death to life. Then knowledge and grace and power
And a new word filled his lips; and joy and courage and love
Were born henceforth in his heart, with the vision that fell from above.
And still, when the days are bitter, and life is clogged with care,
And the heart is salt with unshed tears and tender with despair,
An angel stirs the stagnant soul, and lo! there is healing there.
Once more my song is loosened, and the life and labour sweet;
Once more in the tangled weft the pattern shines complete;
And I know that the self-same grace on my soul has been outpoured.
My spirit, by Damascus Gate, has heard the voice of her Lord.

III.

The Voice.

"And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

1. *The vision was accompanied by a voice.* There is an apparent strangeness in the account which is given by himself, and by St. Luke, of the facts of St. Paul's conversion. That strangeness, that startling simplicity and plainness, carries with it the evidence of its own truthfulness. The temptation to a dishonest, or even to a weak nature, would have been to raise all the circumstances of such a change to the height of what would seem to men stately, Divine, terrible. All familiar speech, all that drew its birth from the common experience of mankind, would have been carefully excluded. The tongue of men and of angels would have seemed too feeble for so high a theme. There would have been an attempt to soar "into the third heaven," and to speak the words which it is not "lawful for a man to utter." St. Paul's language is, we know, very different. He uses here, as always, "great plainness of speech." He tells us, indeed, of "the glory above the brightness of the sun" which shone round about him; tells us how in that brightness he saw a form which others did not see, and heard *words* which they did not hear, although the *voice* of Him that spake filled them with strange fears; and then we come to that Divine message from the Lord of glory to the soul of His servant, and we find it simply this, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

2. The words came with a startling abruptness; they were themselves plain and familiar. The young Jew of Tarsus might have read them in Greek books, or heard the proverb quoted a hundred times among his Hebrew friends. They belonged to the widespread treasure of similitudes and proverbs drawn from the simplest forms of man's life and work; and, as such, were not confined to any race or country. Those words St. Paul had probably had often in his thoughts, or on his lips. Never before, we may be sure, had they come to him as they came now; never before had he applied them to himself, and seen what they had to tell him of God's dealings with him. We may be sure that they were the very words he needed; that none which we should have thought loftier and more solemn could have done their work so

effectually. What an entirely new light those words would throw on the zeal and vehemence in which the persecutor had gloried; how utterly they would reverse the judgments which he had passed on them! They revealed to him that he, the pride of the schools of Jerusalem, the rigid and scrupulous Pharisee, was, like the brute beast in that proverbial speech, struggling against the guidance of one mightier and wiser than himself, and by that resistance bringing upon himself nothing but an increase of pain and confusion. He was himself "kicking against the pricks." In his blindness and ignorance he did not, or would not, see the first promptings of the Almighty hand that marked out his true path for him. There had already been, as the words imply, signs and tokens of the will of God, *goads* that entered deep into his soul, and brought with them pain and misery; but he went on in spite of these, crushing all feelings of pity, doubt, remorse, and steeling himself into what seemed to him a noble and heroic hardness. These words bring before us a new phase in the mind of that persecutor.

3. It was a touching question to the infuriated man, whose great object was to obliterate every trace of the Christian religion and to harry and harass its adherents. It is not, "Why persecutest thou them?" but, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" "God is angry with me," said Luther one day to the good monk Staupitz. "No," answered the venerable teacher, "you are angry with God." Saul of Tarsus was mad as a demon with hatred to Christ. Christ was gentle and loving to him, and the expostulation was most pathetic. "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" Ineffably tender and close is the relationship between Him and all His disciples. Let the humblest member of His mystical body suffer, and at once the Head suffers, by the subtle yet potent influence of spiritual sympathy. He showed greater sensitiveness in regard to His mystical body than in regard to His physical body. He did not say anything like this to any of those who inflicted upon Him cruel and excruciating torture. He endured the pain and agony in the silence of patience. But when, after His ascension, His followers were being haled to prison, and condemned to

undergo hardship and death for His sake, He said, "Why persecutest thou Me?"

¶ *Why persecutest thou Me?* The enthroned Saviour is bound to every one of His subjects by ties of holy sympathy. Amid the glory of heaven He does not forget their needs.

He in the days of feeble flesh
Poured out His cries and tears;
And, though exalted, feels afresh
What every member bears.

Any act of kindness performed to His humblest follower is an act of kindness to Himself. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me." Any act of cruelty to them is an act of cruelty to Him. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."[1]

We have no tears Thou wilt not dry;
We have no wounds Thou wilt not heal;
No sorrows pierce our human hearts
That Thou, dear Saviour! dost not feel.

Thy pity, like the dew, distils;
And Thy compassion, like the light,
Our every morning overfills,
And crowns with stars our every night.

Let not the world's rude conflict drown
The charmed music of Thy voice,
That calls the weary ones to rest
And bids all mourning souls rejoice.[2]

[1] E. Morgan. [2] H. M. Kimball.

Come Over and Help Us.

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Come Over and Help Us.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.—Acts xvi. 9.

1. This, says Sir W. M. Ramsay, is in many respects the most remarkable paragraph in Acts. In the first place the Divine action is introduced three times in four verses, marking and justifying the new and great step which is made at this point. In xiii. 1–11 also the Divine action is mentioned three times, leading up to the important development which the author defines as "opening the door of belief to the Nations"; but in that case there were only two actual manifestations of the Divine guidance and power. Here on three distinct occasions the guidance of God was manifested in three different ways—the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, and the Vision—and the three manifestations all lead up to one end, first forbidding Paul's purpose of preaching in Asia, then forbidding his purpose of entering Bithynia, and finally calling him forward into Macedonia. Now, amid "the multitude of the revelations" (2 Cor. xii. 7) granted to Paul, Luke selects only those which have a distinct bearing on his own purpose as a historian, and omits the vast majority, which were all important in their influence on Paul's conduct and character. What is his reason for the insistence in this case?

2. It is not easy to account on strictly historical grounds for the emphasis laid on the passage to Macedonia. Lightfoot, in his fine essay on "the Churches of Macedonia," recognizes with his usual insight that it is necessary to acknowledge and to explain that emphasis; but his attempt cannot be called successful. As he himself acknowledges, the narrative gives no ground to think that the passage from Troas to Philippi was ever thought of by Luke as a passage from continent to continent. A broad distinction between the two opposite sides of the Hellespont, as

belonging to two different continents, had no existence in the thought of those who lived in the Ægean lands, and regarded the sea as the path connecting the Ægean countries with each other; and the distinction had no more existence from a political point of view, for Macedonia and Asia were merely two provinces of the Roman Empire, closely united by common language and character, and divided from the Latin-speaking provinces farther west.

3. The sweep and rush of the narrative is unique in Acts: point after point, province after province, are hurried over. The natural development of Paul's work along the great central route of the Empire was forbidden, and the next alternative that rose in his mind was forbidden: he was led across Asia from the extreme south-east to the extreme north-west corner, and yet prevented from preaching in it; everything seemed dark and perplexing, until at last a vision in Troas explained the purpose of this strange journey. We cannot but be struck with the fact, that in this paragraph the idea seems to clothe itself in the natural words, and not to have been laboriously expressed by a foreign mind. And the origin of the words becomes clear when we look at the concluding sentence: "Immediately *we* sought to go forth into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that 'God has called *us* for to preach the Gospel unto them.'" The author was with Paul in Troas; and the intensity of this paragraph is due to his recollection of the words in which Paul had recounted the vision, and explained the whole Divine plan that had guided him through his perplexing wanderings. The words derive their vivid and striking character from Paul, and they remained indelibly imprinted on Luke's memory.[1]

We shall take the subject in two parts—

I. The Vision

II. The Appeal.

I.

The Vision.

"A vision appeared to Paul in the night; There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him."

1. *A vision.* The word (ὅραμα) is used by St. Luke eleven

[1] W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, 198.

times in Acts (elsewhere in N.T. only in Matt. xvii. 9). It is expressive more naturally of a vision during wakefulness, whereas "dream" (ὄναρ) is the usual term for a vision during sleep.

2. *The Meaning of the Vision.*

(1) Whoever St. Paul's night visitant may have been it is impossible to overlook the fact that great importance attached to the occurrence. To St. Paul "the vision was the reflexion of waking thoughts, and the revelation of the will of God" (Eugène Bersier); it is easy to understand his eagerness to follow this vision after he had been twice hindered in his purpose, and although it may well be that neither he nor St. Luke regarded the journey from Troas to Philippi as a passage from one continent to another continent, yet, to St. Paul, the extension of Christ's kingdom was the one burning desire, and in the good Providence of Him who "sees with larger other eyes than ours," the vision was instrumental in pointing the way for the founding of St. Paul's first European Church. It is perhaps venturesome to say that the Gospel was now first preached on the continent of Europe, as the good tidings may have reached Rome through the Jews and proselytes who heard St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost.

(2) As our pioneer Apostle stood on this Asiatic frontier, among its stirring historic recollections, we must not suppose his thoughts rested long or chiefly upon them. His ardent desire to advance his Master's work, together with an ever-present sense of his responsibilities, urged him to unflagging activity. Besides, the remarkable providential guidance under which he had been led hither, must have induced him to expect still further direction. There were heights of heathenism, vast expanses of moral darkness lying beyond the western horizon. Does his Master design that he shall scale those heights, that he shall penetrate those wastes? The vision leaves him no longer in doubt as to the field he shall enter.

(3) He receives no direct instructions, but the intimation and signs of a symbolic vision. He does not receive an explicit command, or demonstrative proof of the particular path on which God wishes him to walk, but implicit indications, inferential proof of both. In his peculiar circumstances, in his expectant state of mind, with his past experience of the ways in which God guides,

he speedily and rightly understands the instructions God means to communicate to him. He speedily interprets the vision; in it he hears the voice of God and the voices of his destitute fellow-men calling to him. Their spiritual distress and need comes as the cry of men perishing for lack of help, which he can give—the cry of those who have no vision, and are ready to perish in the misery of sin and ignorance of the Gospel. We read in the verse following the text, "After he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel unto them."

(4) *What does the vision mean for us?* It is a repetition with renewed emphasis of the command, "Go ye into all the world." It is a call to interpret the symbol in the light of all our knowledge. Archbishop Temple has said: "The call to preach the Gospel to all nations, to every creature, has become more imperative, because it has become more clearly understood, and more completely within our reach. We know now what is meant by 'all nations.' We can count the nations; we can sum up all their languages; we can precisely define their limits. The habitable world has become, not a vast, vague, unlimited expanse, but a definite area, with bounds that can be traced upon a map. And so, too, now, all the nations have become accessible; we not only know them, but we also know how to reach them." They wait our answer to their appeal. They wonder why we delay to come to them.

¶ There is an old story that caught fire in my heart the first time it came to me, and burns anew at each memory of it. It told of a time in the southern part of our country when the sanitary regulations were not so good as of late. A city was being scourged by a disease that seemed quite beyond control. The city's carts were ever rolling over the cobble-stones, helping to carry away those whom the plague had slain.

Into one very poor home, a labouring man's home, the plague had come. And the father and children had been carried out until on the day of this story there remained but two, the mother and her baby boy of perhaps five years. The boy crept up into his mother's lap, put his arms about her neck, and with his baby eyes so close, said, "Mother, father's dead, and brothers and sister are dead;—if *you* die, what'll I do?" The poor mother had thought of it, of course. What could she say? Quieting her voice as much as possible, she said, "If I die, Jesus will come for you." That was quite satisfactory to the boy. He had been

taught about Jesus, and felt quite safe with Him, and so went about his play on the floor. And the boy's question proved only too prophetic. Quick work was done by the dread disease. And soon she was being laid away by strange hands.

It is not difficult to understand that in the sore distress of the time the boy was forgotten. When night came, he crept into bed, but could not sleep. Late in the night he got up, found his way out along the street, down the road, into where he had seen the men put her. And throwing himself down on the freshly shovelled earth, sobbed and sobbed until nature kindly stole consciousness away for a time.

Very early the next morning a gentleman, coming down the road from some errand of mercy, looked over the fence, and saw the little fellow there. Quickly suspecting some sad story, he called him, "My boy, what are you doing there? My boy, wake up, what are you doing there all alone?" The boy waked up, rubbed his baby eyes, and said, "Father's dead, and brothers and sister's dead, and now—*mother's*—dead—too. And she said, if she did die, Jesus would come for me. And He hasn't come. And I'm so tired waiting." The man swallowed something in his throat, and in a voice not very clear, said, "Well, my boy, I've come for you." And the little fellow waking up, with his baby eyes so big, said, "I think you've been a long time coming."[1]

II.

The Appeal.

"Come over into Macedonia, and help us."

1. *It is the cry of Greece to Judea*—the appeal of the secular to the sacred. Greece had every secular possession the heart can name—beauty, philosophy, art, culture, gaiety. Judea had at this moment no secular possession at all; she had only Christ. Yet rich Greece called for the help of poor Judea! It is no passing picture, no evanescent experience; it is an eternal truth. The secular world cannot live without the help of Christ. No man can fulfil the duties of the hour by the light of the hour; it is always by a coming light. The schoolboy works for his prize, the clerk for his promotion. Nothing of value is stimulated by the mere sense of the moment. Not even charity is so stimulated.

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 61.

My benevolence for anything is proportionate to my idea of its longevity. Rome had no hospitals for incurables, no infirmaries for lives useless to the State. Why have *we* such institutions? It is because we think of these people as possible members of a future state. Our charity has been born of our faith and our hope. Why do we not follow the Roman in eliminating deformed infants? Because we have more pity? Nay, the Roman was prompted by pity. We refuse to follow, not because we feel more deeply, but because we see more clearly. We have caught sight of another chance for the deformed infant—a chance which his misfortune will not impair. We have seen that he too is worth training, worth educating, worth moulding—that there is a place waiting for him in a republic even larger than that of Rome.

Through midnight gloom from Macedon,
The cry of myriads as of one,
The voiceful silence of despair,
Is eloquent in awful prayer:
The soul's exceeding bitter cry,
"Come o'er and help us or we die!"

How mournfully it echoes on,
For half the world is Macedon!
These brethren to their brethren call,
And by the Love which loved them all,
And by the whole world's Life they cry,
"O ye that live, behold we die!"

By other sounds our ears are won
Than that which wails from Macedon;
The roar of gain is round us rolled,
Or we unto ourselves are sold,
And cannot list the alien cry
"O hear and help us lest we die!"

Yet with that cry from Macedon
The very car of Christ rolls on!
"I come; who would abide My day
In yonder wilds prepare My way;
My voice is crying in their cry,
Help ye the dying lest ye die!"[1]

[1] S. J. Stone. *Poems and Hymns*, 248.

2. *It is a cry from the weak to the strong.* Examine the spirit of the prayer in the words of the text as to the nature of the help invoked. It is a strong word (*βοήθησον*) that is translated "help"—strong as "succour" or "rescue." When the partners of Simon were beckoned—to come and help (*ἐλθόντας συλλαβέσθαι*) —the beckoners were doing their best to "bear a hand." But it is the "help of the helpless" that is implied in the text; so helpless —at least in some cases, and those the worst—as not even to know that they needed deliverance. The man of Macedonia was an ideal, whether or not he was an actual, man. He is the impersonation of a need—felt, or so much the worse when it is not felt. From this the Apostle rightly concluded that not man, but the Lord, had called them to preach the Gospel in Europe.

¶ Do you remember De Quincey's dream—how in his dream he saw the great chariot rushing down the vast aisles of a cathedral, past the storied tombs of kings and warriors, on which were the sculptured forms of the mighty dead, and yet upon the pavement in the very track of the chariot was a little child stooping down and playing with a flower, heedless of the approaching death? So terrible and imminent was the tragedy, that at the moment when the horse's feet were about to crush the life out of the little one, the figure of a trumpeter that was lying on a tomb started up from his stony sleep and blew a blast of warning, while an angel hand stretched forth to snatch the little one from its awful death![1]

3. *It is the cry of earth to heaven.* If the great and good gifts should not be bestowed upon people that have not intelligently asked for them, then what becomes of God's gift of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to this world? Did we ask for Him? Did we send for Him? Did we clamour till our voices reached Him in the high halls of heaven, and He condescended to come at our call? Was the Cross of Christ, with all the glory of suffering, of measureless sacrifice, a response to a framed request for such a wondrous manifestation of wisdom and of love? We know that it was not. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And yet I think our Lord would tell us that He saw, in the vision of His infinite love—that vision that interprets and transfigures and disentangles objects from their vulgar limitations

[1] J. M. Gibbon.

and surroundings—in His high heaven men stretching out hands, and saying, "Come down and help us."

¶ In the year 1896 Dr. Miller, Principal of the Christian College of Madras, was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. An address came from India to the Assembly. It came from persons the great majority of whom had not accepted Christianity. It was a cry, not from the West to the East like the cry of the man of Macedonia, but from the East to the West. In reply to the address Dr. Rainy said in the Assembly: "We rejoice in all good gifts which are peculiarly your own; and we would be serviceable to you in communicating, so far as you will receive them, whatever good gifts have been bestowed upon us by Him who has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth. But, in that spirit, we desire, affectionately and above all things, once more to commend to you, as our missionaries have often done, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who for us men and for our sake took flesh and died. We men in the West have no better claim to Him than you have. We possess nothing so precious—we value nothing so much—we have no source of good so full, fruitful, and enduring—we have nothing to compare with the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him we must bear witness. And we should gladly consent that you should cease to listen to us, if you would be led to give your ear and your heart to Him."[1]

[1] *The Life of Principal Rainy*, ii. 175.

What must I do to be Saved?

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What must I do to be Saved?

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.—Acts xvi. 30, 31.

The events recorded in this sixteenth chapter of the Acts are not the only ones which have given a name and a fame in the after-world to an obscure provincial town in Macedonia. At this same Philippi, about one hundred years before the arrival there of Paul and Silas, the empire of the world had been played for and lost and won. The great battle which derives its name from this city did much to shape the after-history of the world. No one capable of judging will deny this; and yet there are names and incidents linked with Philippi which possess a far deeper interest for us, which touch us far more nearly than the conflict between the chiefs of the two selfish factions, who, quarrelling over the spoils of the world, here decided by the bloody arbitrament of the sword to which those spoils should belong. The shocks of contending hosts, the deeds which once filled the world with their fame, these have passed away. Brutus and Cassius, Antony and the young Octavius, win but a languid interest from us; while Lydia, the humble purple-seller of Thyatira, the first-fruits of the Gospel on European soil, whose heart the Lord opened here, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul," and Paul and Silas singing hymns to God out of the depths of their dungeon, and that unnamed Philippian jailor with his earnest agonizing cry, "What must I do to be saved?"—their story is ever fresh and ever new; it has the same hold upon us as it had upon those who first heard it, touching, as it does, the central heart of things, the everlasting hopes and interests of men.

I.

The Scene in the Prison.

1. On some false or frivolous pretext, Paul and his fellow-labourer, Silas, were dragged before the Roman magistrates at

Philippi. These, it seems, would not so much as hear them in their own defence; but with their own hands "rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them." Perhaps, but we cannot be sure of this, Paul, if he might have spoken, would have pleaded his Roman citizenship, as he did at Jerusalem, and so have saved himself from the last indignity of scourging. But, whether this is so or not, "when they had laid many stripes upon them" (St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, speaks of having been "shamefully entreated at Philippi"), "they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely." He, careless about their sufferings, only selfishly careful to make all safe for himself in the easiest way, "having received such a charge, thrust them *into the inner prison*," a dark dungeon, below the level of the ordinary prison, and, smarting and bleeding from the rods as they were, "made their feet fast in the stocks," an instrument of punishment as painful as it was shameful, but which a great prophet of the elder covenant had made trial of before them (see Jer. xx. 2); and so left them there to themselves; or rather, not to themselves, but to their God.

2. "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises unto God." They were praying; this was natural. The cry *de profundis* is the one which most readily arises; but more than this their voices were voices not of prayer only, but also of praise. They "sang praises" unto Him "who giveth songs in the night," who had counted them worthy to suffer for His name's sake, who had brought them in this sacrament of suffering into a closer fellowship with their Lord, the captain of the crucified, the leader and commander in the great army of martyrs. *We* count it a great feat of Christian magnanimity not to murmur, to be what we call resigned: here were those who were "joyful in tribulation." "And the prisoners," we are told, "heard them," or "listened to them." Strange, indeed, must those voices of prayer and thanksgiving have sounded in that place, most unlike the voices with which those walls at other times had resounded. Curses, no doubt, were familiar enough in that dismal house of punishment and pain, but not blessings; oaths, but not prayers; wailing and gnashing of teeth, of the slave and the malefactor, not hymns of a holy gladness, of the saint and the martyr. No

wonder, then, that they all listened; and presently the Lord set His seal to the prayer of His servants. "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed."

3. The earthquake which released Paul and Silas wakened the jailor, who, "seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped." Suicide was held by the Romans to be not only lawful, but even in certain cases commendable. This unhappy man knew that he was responsible to his superiors for the safety of those committed to his charge; he knew that the magistrates would show no mercy (cf. xii. 19), as he had slept at his post; and so he preferred immediate death to the disgrace of public exposure and the death to which he would certainly be sentenced. But he was arrested in the very act of self-destruction by the Apostle's voice, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." And now a new terror took possession of him. He saw the miraculous interference which restrained the freed prisoners from escaping; he called to mind the causes which had led to the imprisonment of these Christians. Certain strange words which he had heard often of late must have recurred to his mind: "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation."

4. "He sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" A moment's consideration is enough to show how little foundation there is for the common assumption that the man was in a great state of anxiety about his soul. He was a heathen, and a heathen of the lowest class. No sense of sin (as we understand it) could be reasonably expected of such a man; nor, indeed, among the mass of the heathen generally. Feelings of remorse for his rough treatment of Paul and Silas no doubt mingled with his terror, but in any case it was a heathen conscience; and the self-accusations which it suggested were perhaps not so much about a wicked or a wasted life as about some superstitious rites neglected, or some idolatrous sacrifices not duly honoured, and it was in blindness and ignorance, and without

anything at first which we should call concern about his soul, that he cried so piteously, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

¶ Believing Christians, it is said, can be divided into two classes. One of these classes is typified by the charcoal-burner, who, asked by a learned doctor what he believed, answered, "I believe what the Church believes." "Yes," said the doctor, "but what does the Church believe?" "The Church believes what I believe." "Well, but what is it that you and the Church believe?" The charcoal-burner hesitated, but at length replied, "The Church and I believe—the same thing!" Of the other class we find an illustration in the little girl walking with her father in the country, and asking, "What is that?" "That, my dear, is a cow." "But *why*, papa?" Our sympathies are with the little girl, but is there not a point where both these classes meet? And if so, it is surely faith in Christ. Since the Philippian jailor was quite able to embrace this faith, it is evident that it does not need any gifts of intellect, or even any elaborate instruction in the things of God. One of those Assyrian Christians, of whom so many have been massacred in recent years, explained to a Western traveller that he and his were very poor and very helpless, and (what was worse) very ignorant even of their own religion; but they knew who their Master was and they were ready to lay down their lives for Him. And so they have, in more instances than we can number, without hesitation.

5. The story of the Philippian jailor will never be forgotten. It will remain for ever as a witness of the power of the Holy Spirit to change a human life by turning darkness into light. The man, though a jailor, was a man still. He had his human emotions, his human fears, and—as the sequel shows—his human compassions also, which his grim trade had been powerless to crush out. When he asked the question it was not, we imagine, with any very distinct conception of its bearing. He spoke of saving. What did he mean by this? His soul was convulsed by a tumult of conflicting passions. Only the moment before he would have done the very reverse of saving himself; he would have committed suicide. The first instantaneous terror was past. His prisoners were safe. His own life was safe—safe from his own murderous hand, and safe from the displeasure of his masters. But a vague, bewildering awe had seized him. He was in imminent peril, he knew not whence and how. Hence his imploring cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

And God took him at his word. God accepted his confused yearning; God heard his inarticulate utterance. He asked for salvation. And God taught him salvation; God gave him salvation, a gift far higher, far nobler, far more beneficent, than it had entered into his heart to conceive. It is instructive to observe the instrumentality which laid the jailor prostrate at the Apostle's feet. This instrumentality is twofold, partly external and partly moral. There is the physical catastrophe, and there is the spiritual influence.

(1) There is the physical catastrophe. Suddenly, we are told, there was a great earthquake. The prison was shaken to its foundations. The doors flew open. The fetters were loosed. It is thus that God works not uncommonly in His regenerative processes. Through the avenues of the senses He forces His way to the spirit. It may be that the Lord Himself is not in the great and strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire; but the fire and the earthquake and the strong wind are His precursors, are His pioneers. They are as the voice of one crying in the wilderness of the man's heart, "Prepare ye the way." They arrest the eye and the ear; they overawe and subdue the spirit; they hold the man spellbound; and in the supervening silence the still small voice is heard. So it was here. Agitated and bewildered—his whole moral nature reeling and staggering with the shock—the jailor flung himself at the Apostle's feet.

(2) But this was not sufficient. The physical shock might arrest, but it could not instruct. It might overawe, but it could not inspire. The rumbling and the crash of the earthquake is not the only voice which breaks the midnight silence. There is the voice of prayer and praise, borne aloft to the Throne of Grace from those subterranean dungeons. We may well imagine that this voice also, so strange, so unearthly, so unlike the gibes and the curses and the blasphemies which were wont to issue from the prisoners' cells, had arrested the jailor's ear; that they had suggested hopes and fears, which he could but vaguely understand; that they held out to him a new ideal of life, at which he blindly clutched; that, mingling with his dreams, they had moulded his awakening thoughts; and thus insensibly they had shaped the cry which rose to his lips, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"[1]

[1] J. B. Lightfoot.

6. The calm answer of Paul and Silas was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." They were not afraid of that Gospel which they came to preach; they did not count that what God had made free, it would be prudent for man to clog with conditions. They did not say to themselves, "This wicked, this hardened jailor must not be encouraged to believe too soon in the forgiveness of sins; he must be kept at a due distance for awhile; and then some glimpses of hope may be given him, and the prospect at some future day of a full pardon." Not so; but the rich treasure-house of God's grace was thrown open to him at once, and he was bidden to help himself, and to make himself rich with the best gifts which were there.

II.

The Question.

"What must I do to be saved?"

1. Before we come to the words of the question we should take note that, whatever may have prompted similar questions—such as the question of the Rich Young Ruler, "What shall I do that I may have eternal life?"—this question was clearly quickened by *fear*. The jailor, we are told, was "trembling for fear" (ver. 29, R.V.); he had been alarmed by the earthquake, by the prison walls rocking and shaking, by the whole occurrences of the night. It was fear, physical fear at first, that led to the spiritual fear that was uttered in the cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

¶ It is not necessary to say that there are many cases in which the longing for salvation has not been quickened by fear. Children who have grown up in Christian homes, and have been tenderly nurtured "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord," breathing an atmosphere of piety from their earliest years, are often sweetly drawn to Christ by His tender love, and can hardly remember the time when they did not love Christ. On the other hand, it ought never to be forgotten that in many other cases conviction of sin, and of the need of salvation, have been the direct result of personal fear of being lost. Any minister who leaves out of his preaching "the note of fear" is not only unfaithful to the truth, but he is neglecting one of the means

the Spirit of God has used in every age for the conversion of souls.[1]

2. Now come to the question itself: "What must I do to be saved?" This is no worn-out, obsolete question. It is as real now as it was nineteen centuries ago; as pertinent here in the heart of Christendom as it was there amidst the surroundings of paganism; as vital to us as it was to that poor, bewildered jailor in that far-off Roman colony. But it matters much—it matters everything—in what sense we ask the question. What do we mean by this saying? From what evil do we desire to be rescued?

i. What Salvation is not.

It is well first of all to see clearly what salvation is not. Dr. M. D. Shutter has forcibly stated some common mistakes as to the meaning of this great word. From what, he asks, do you want to be saved?

(1) "Well," you answer, "I know that I have sinned, and I feel that God is angry with the wicked and hates them. I want you to tell me how to be saved from His *wrath*. This is my desire." Now, there is not and cannot be any such thing in God as you understand by wrath. It is true He has expressed His disapprobation of sin in the consequences which follow the violation of His laws in the soul, the body, the universe. But this is done in love to correct evil, to turn men aside from sin, and not in frenzy. His bolts are not hurled in vengeance, as men retaliate upon each other. He does not delight in destruction. When His laws smite us in their operation, it is to heal and not to kill. The sword falls with the glitter of lightning, but also with the glow of sunrise upon its blade. Let us be sure that we can never receive harm from God, that we can never receive mischief of any kind from God.

> The ancient gods are dead.
> No Roman despot sits on heaven's throne,
> Dispensing favours by his will alone;
> Sends some to heaven and some to lowest hell,
> In unprogressive woe or bliss to dwell;
> Demands no horrid sacrifice of blood,
> Nor nails his victims to the cruel wood
> In others' guilty stead.
>
> [1] G. S. Barrett

The ancient gods are dead.
Law rules majestic in the courts above,
And has no moods, but hand in hand with love,
Sweeps thro' the universe, and smiling sees
The spheres obedient to her vast decrees,
Proclaims all men the sons not slaves of God.
And breathes the message of His Fatherhood.
The true God is not dead.

(2) "But," you say, "I may not have been happy in expressing myself. Perhaps I ought to say that it is the *justice* of God from which I desire to be saved. This may be the better word." The justice of God? Saved from the justice of God? Why, our hope is that equal and exact justice will at last be done everywhere and to all men. Strange that we should want to be delivered from this attribute of God and its operations, unless we are consciously trying to outwit and defraud Him. The trouble is, we have inserted brutality and fiendishness into our conception of justice, and stand trembling before our own caricature. Justice renders to each his due at last—nothing more, nothing less. Justice meets out to each transgression and disobedience a fair recompense of reward—a "just" recompense. Saved from the justice of God? No, God's justice has been the hope of the oppressed in all ages. It is the hope of those who are trodden down to-day. It will work in this world and the next, until all wrongs are righted, till that which is crooked shall have been made straight, till the hills are levelled and the valleys exalted. We sing with Whittier—

We only know that God is just,
And every wrong shall die.

We exclaim with Queen Katharine—

Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge
That no king can corrupt.

(3) "But," you say, "perhaps I have not said what I mean. It is the *penalty of sin* from which I wish to be saved." Exactly so. You want to be assured that you will not suffer for your sins. You want to be told how the pain and anguish and disgrace attending sin may be removed. You want to know how the

burden of remorse shall be lifted from your conscience. You want to know how your boat may play upon the current of Niagara above the falls, without taking a plunge over the awful precipice. But this is precisely what cannot be done. There is no salvation from the penalty of sin, *in itself considered.* Every evil thought, every unkind word, every unmanly deed, will bring, here or hereafter, its just and equitable penalty. This is as certain as sunlight or gravitation.

ii. What Salvation is.

The salvation of Jesus Christ is a great salvation—far greater than most men have ever thought or imagined. It meant and it means a large and many-sided experience; the highest quality and order of human life, the highest character and blessedness which men individually and collectively are capable of reaching and realizing.

¶ I do not know of anything more singular in our English versions than the liberty so deliberately taken with our Lord's use of this familiar word. Every reader of the Greek Testament knows that He used it quite indifferently of the blessed work of recovery whether of body or of soul. (Compare St. Luke vii. 50 with viii. 48, where the whole formula is exactly the same.) Every one who speaks English knows that we habitually use the word "save" for any kind of rescue—from fire, from drowning, from any danger of bodily destruction, just as much as from moral and spiritual ruin and death. Yet in the Gospels the word is regularly mistranslated "made whole," when it refers to a healing of the body. The Authorized Version, indeed, had permitted the proper word to stand in *one* instance, St. Luke xviii. 42, and even this one exception was invaluable for teaching purposes. Now, alas, even this lapse into accuracy has been obliterated by the Revised Version. It is quite true that when a person is "saved" from the misery of blindness, or the torment of disease, he may almost equally well be said to be "made whole." But it is not a question of what our Lord *might* have said, but of what He *did* say. He did not, as a matter of fact, say, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (which would have required a different Greek word), but "thy faith hath *saved* thee"; and in altering His words, the translators have given a rendering which is inaccurate; and this is so unlike the authors of the Revised Version in general that one is naturally led to suppose that it was done under the pressure of some very strong theological

pre-possession. But these pre-possessions have no place in the work of translating the Scriptures.[1]

1. Salvation is first a certain deliverance from the depression and dismay which spring from our knowledge and fear of the evil we have done; it is a certain relief from the shame which paralyses hopeful endeavour, and from the ignorant and guilty dread which makes the thought of God a burden and not an inspiration. The suffering of an awakened conscience is of all burdens the hardest to be borne. This was the Nemesis that the ancients pictured as ever pursuing the ever-flying and never-escaping criminal. This was the torment that drove Lady Macbeth mad—who, with all her ablutions, could not wash out the bloodstains from her hand. And it is the sorrow not only of those who have committed great crimes against humanity, but of every man who is haunted by lost opportunities, of every man who has fled from duties that demanded faithfulness unto death, of every man who has given his soul away in exchange for some worldly prize, of every man who has not lived up to his light, and has not been obedient to the heavenly vision when obedience was inconvenient and hard; of every man awakened to the sense of the irrevocable past and to the thought of what he might have been and might have done.

¶ Every one reprobates the custom of throwing children into the Ganges. But does every one stop to consider why the Hindu mother commits such cruelty? She is a mother. Motherhood must have borne into her own heart somewhat of the strongest affection of earth. Because the child is hers, it must be horror to watch it die. Under other circumstances she would give her own life to save the child's. Who knows the smothered agonies beside the Ganges—Rachels lamenting their children "because they are not," mothers tearing their babes from their bosoms and turning homeward with aching hearts? Of the terrible paradox there is just one explanation; in the awful crime there is just one exalting truth: Those Hindu mothers are trying to answer for themselves a question which lay in their souls before their children were born: "What must I do to be saved?"[2]

2. Salvation means, then, in the second place, a certain deliverance from the depression and fear of sin; it means a sense of the forgiving mercy and help of God; it means the victory of

[1] R. Winterbotham. [2] G. C. Peck.

faith and hope; but all this is only clearing the ground for the great salvation of Jesus Christ. The removal of tormenting shame, of our ignorant and guilty dread of God and fate, is only the first step in the way of the Christian salvation. There is evil in the heart and life, and from its presence and dominion we require to be delivered. We are not in real contact with the Divine order of the world until we feel that it is not penalty here or hereafter God wants to save us from—but sin. We bear and must bear the punishment of our sins. The remission of sin is not the remission of punishment. We reap what we sow. It is by this severity of discipline that God makes us see the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Justice and mercy are eternally one. Justice is beneficent and the retributive forces are redemptive. The cry to escape from the natural penalty of sin is the cry, not of the higher but of the lower nature; the cry of a man who cares more for his own personal safety and comfort than he cares for the order and will of God. The man truly awakened and enlightened wants to be delivered from the power of evil affections and evil habits, to be saved from his infirmities and sins, even though it be by fire; to be made right with God, right with men who are the children of God, and right with the whole order of things which is of God.

¶ What must I *do* to be saved? What must I do, that I may be delivered from this my sin? What must I do, that I may cleanse myself from this impurity which sullies my soul? What must I do, that I may rid me of this untruthfulness, this dishonesty, this insincerity, which mars my life? What must I do, that I may expel this avarice which cramps my heart? What must I do, that I may shake off this lethargy which numbs my spirit? What must I do, that I may cast out this demon of worldliness, of self which shuts out Thee and Thy presence, O God? For Thou, Lord, and Thou only, art salvation, Thou only art heaven, Thou only art eternal life.[1]

3. But, thirdly, while it is much to be delivered from perverted and corrupt affection and to have the power of evil habit broken, yet much more remains to be done to have the fulness of the blessing which the gospel of Jesus Christ calls "salvation." Salvation is not only deliverance from sin; it is growth in all trueness and goodness of life. Christian character is not an incident, a result, a test of salvation—it is salvation.

[1] J. B. Lightfoot.

Salvation is character. The perfection of character and the work of salvation include the training of every power and affection to the standard of the perfect man; the rising up on all sides of our being and life to Him who is the head.

¶ In his book on *Darkest England* General Booth continually speaks with the most unquestioning confidence of those who, under the ministry of his lieutenants, have been converted, as "soundly saved." And the thing seems very definite in these cases, a clear and manifest passing out of darkness into light, out of drunkenness, debauchery, and crime into sobriety and industry and love and religion. When a man has drunk himself nearly into the grave, has spent as many years in prison as out of it, has been a thief, a wife-beater, only by chance not a murderer, and then turns right round, renounces drink, works honestly, makes a decent home for his wife, and wins the respect of all who know him, then there is no difficulty in understanding what "being saved" means. When a girl has forfeited all that makes girlhood beautiful, and has grown stained and sodden with drink, and then turns right round and rebuilds the temple of a woman's sanctity, and spends all her days and years in devoted ministry among those who are now what she was then, we see quite plainly that "being saved" is a remarkably definite thing, and we dare not charge with cant the phraseology of the Christian people who have wrought this change. No man can doubt that such a revolution in the outward life is but the signal of a corresponding revolution in the inward life. Through the application of some potent spiritual energy the nerve and fibre of the soul have undergone a penetrating change. Old passions have been killed. New affections have been born. A new light has entered into the life and transformed it wonderfully, the soul has been born again, the old man has been put off, the new man which is akin to Jesus Christ has been put on.[1]

4. And, fourthly, salvation is not something wrought in and for ourselves alone; it means a life lived not for self, but for God and mankind—it means not only character but service. It is in the teaching of our Lord Himself that we have His large conception of salvation. The name He gives it is the Kingdom of God. Now a kingdom is a society. About any merely private salvation that ended in one's self Jesus Christ had very little to say but this: He that saveth himself shall lose himself. He always put God—God's will, God's work, and the service of God in mankind

[1] R. A. Armstrong.

—where much religion that calls itself by His name puts self—self-interest, personal safety, comfort, peace, and final bliss. To be self-centred is in Christ's judgment to be in a state of condemnation—to be dead, not alive.

Who standeth at the gate?—A woman old,
A widow from the husband of her love.
"O lady, stay, this wind is piercing cold,
Oh look at the keen frosty moon above;
I have no home, am hungry, feeble, poor."—
"I'm really very sorry, but I can
Do nothing for you; there's the clergyman."
The lady said, and shivering closed the door.

Who standeth at the gate?—Wayworn and pale
A grey-haired man asks charity again.
"Kind lady, I have journeyed far, and fail
Through weariness; for I have begged in vain
Some shelter, and can find no lodging-place."—
She answered: "There's the work-house very near;
Go, for they'll certainly receive you there"—
Then shut the door against his pleading face.

Who standeth at the gate?—A stunted child,
Her sunk eyes sharpened with precocious care.
"O lady, save me from a home defiled,
From shameful sights and sounds that taint the air
Take pity on me, teach me something good."—
"For shame, why don't you work instead of cry?
I keep no young impostors here, not I."
She slammed the door, indignant where she stood.

Who standeth at the gate, and will be heard?
Arise, O woman, from thy comforts now:
Go forth again to speak the careless word,
The cruel word unjust, with hardened brow.
But who is this, that standeth not to pray
As once, but terrible to judge thy sin?
This whom thou wouldst not succour nor take in
Nor teach but leave to perish by the way.

"Thou didst it not unto the least of these.
And in them hast not done it unto Me.
Thou wast as a princess rich and at ease—
Now sit in dust and howl for poverty.

Three times I stood beseeching at thy gate,
Three times I came to bless thy soul and save:
But now I come to judge for what I gave,
And now at length thy sorrow is too late."[1]

III.

The Answer.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" is not a little word denoting a little thing. It is a word of wide and profound significance. It is the symbol of an infinite idea—an idea of which the whole New Testament may be said to be the expansion and interpretation. At the beginning of the Christian life, and to the soul spending itself on questions as to personal safety and peace, it means something very simple; but its fulfilment covers more than we think, more than the most faithful can realize in a long lifetime.

¶ "Sirs," cried the Philippian jailor, "what must I do to be saved?" It had been not unnatural to say, "First of all, let us out of prison. Play the man, run the risk, keep a higher law than you break, obey a holier duty than this low one, and bear the penalty. Act, do!" But instead, the evangelists begin deeper down. "Believe," they cry. This is their appeal to the soul. Their own condition affected them not at all in comparison with the condition of this awakening spirit struggling in the dark towards duty and light and peace. Whether they were to be set at liberty was a matter of insignificance compared with the urgency that this jailor should be set at liberty to become a man and a Christian. If he once trusted himself to Christ, he would play the man, he would take all risks, he would dare everything and do anything. But he must begin at the beginning.

i. Believe.

The answer says first "Believe," and next it gives the object of belief—Believe on the Lord Jesus. What is it to believe?

1. Alter the word. Translate the verb "receive." We are eager to do, to give. First we must learn, we must receive.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

¶ The demands of God upon the soul are first that we should accept His gift. We want to make a sacrifice for Him, and do not propose to accept His sacrifice for us. This is the commandment of God—that we receive. The first duty of that child-like spirit, which is the key to the kingdom of God is willingness to be taught. The "better part" in Christianity is to sit at the feet of Christ. Before we can give out we must drink in the very life and spirit of Christ.[1]

2. Again, believing is relying upon, or *trusting*. It is not a mere assent to a dogma, or the acknowledgment of a fact of the past. It is trust—trust in that Christ who died upon the Cross, that, through His merit, He can remove the guilt and punishment of sin; and also trust in that Christ who rose from the dead and is gone into heaven, that, by the power of His eternal Spirit, He can cleanse us from the dominion and habit of sin. That is the faith which saves—trust in the living Jesus, who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

¶ I saw not long ago a woman who said to me, "Is it indeed true that upon trusting in Jesus I shall be saved at once?" I replied, "It is even so." "Why," she said, "my father, when he got religion, was nearly six years a-getting it; and they had to put him in a lunatic asylum part of the time. I thought that there was no getting saved without going through a very dreadful process."[2]

¶ Protracted seasons of conviction are generally owing to defective instruction. Wherever clear and faithful instructions are given to sinners, there you will generally find that convictions are *deep and pungent*, but *short*.[3]

¶ Before his conversion Charles Wesley, then apparently near death, was visited by a poor mechanic, a Moravian, who asked him, "Mr. Wesley, do you hope to be saved?" He answered, "Yes." "For what reason do you hope it?" was next asked. "Because I have used my endeavours to serve God." The poor mechanic shook his head, but said no more; and Wesley tells us, "I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, 'Would he rob me of my endeavours?'" But that shake of the head, silent, sad, solemn, for ever shook Wesley's confidence in his

[1] C. S. Horne. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.
[3] C. G. Finney, *Revivals of Religion*, 429.

endeavours. The light dawned at last; he gave up doing, and wrote these words:—

> Other refuge have I none;
> Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.

He believed on the Lord Jesus, "and was saved."[1]

¶ There is a word in common use in Scotland—*lippen*—which expresses the condition of a person who, entirely unable to support or protect himself, commits his interests, or life, to the safe keeping of some person or object. Thus a man crossing a chasm on a plank *lippens* to the plank. One day Dr. Chalmers visited a poor old bed-ridden woman who was dying. He tried to make her understand the way of salvation. But, alas! it seemed all in vain. The mind he strove to enlighten had been closed so long that it appeared impossible to thrust into it a single ray of light. At last she said, "Ah, sir! I would fain do as you bid me, but I dinna ken how. How can I trust in Christ?" "Oh, woman!" was his expressive answer, in the dialect of the district, "just *lippen* to Him." "Eh, sir," was the reply, "and is that all?" "Yes, yes," was his gratified response; "just *lippen* to Him and you will never perish."

¶ A little girl had asked her father what faith meant, and he had told her to wait for his answer. One day he was doing something in a cellar, the entrance to which was a trap-door in a passage. The child called out to him, "May I come down to you, father?" "Yes," he said. The little girl was going to descend, when she found that the ladder had been taken away. "I can't get down," she called out; "there is no ladder." "Jump down," her father answered, "and I will catch you." The child hesitated; she could not see her father, and below her everything seemed dark. "But I can't see you, father; I can't see anything," she said. "I can see you," was the reply; "jump, and I shall be sure to catch you. My arms are wide open now." The child hesitated no longer; she was sure that her father was there ready to catch her, though she could not see him. She jumped into the darkness and was safely caught.[2]

ii. The Lord Jesus.

1. The belief that saves is belief "on the Lord Jesus." And belief on the Lord Jesus is not merely to believe that a man once lived in the world who was called Jesus. It is not merely to

[1] G. S. Barrett. [2] J. R. Gregory.

believe that the Bible contains a true account of all that He did and said and suffered while He was on earth, and of what He has told us to do for His sake. For it is very easy to believe all these things with the head and yet not to care about them with the heart, just as we believe a great many other things in the world: facts of history, for instance, in which we feel no interest, and which we do not think are of any concern to us. The truth is, that to believe about Christ and to believe in Christ are two very different things. The first will help only so far as it may lead to the second. To know that He is able to save is nothing, unless we are really saved; to know that He is able to wash away our sins is nothing, unless they are washed away; to know that He will help us to come to Him is nothing, unless we come; just in the same way we shall be none the better for knowing that there is a heaven, unless we enter into heaven.

¶ Readers of George MacDonald will remember the scene where Mr. Graham, the pious schoolmaster, is sent for to see the Marquis of Lossie on his death-bed. He ventured this verse to the dying man, but it only drew from him the reply, "That's cant." "After thirty years' trial of it," said the schoolmaster, "it is to me the essence of wisdom. It has given me a peace which makes life or death all but indifferent to me, though I would choose the latter." "What am I to believe about Him, then?" "You are to believe *on* Him, not *about* Him." "I don't understand." "He is our Lord and Master, Elder Brother, King, Saviour, the Divine Man, the human God: to believe on Him is to give ourselves up to Him in obedience, to search out His will, and do it. This is the open door to bliss."[1]

2. In its fulness, then (for it is of a corresponding fulness with salvation), belief on the Lord Jesus involves (1) the apprehension of that Person. We know Him—not, however, in the sense of comprehending Him, but having Him before the mind as an object of apprehension. We know His name. We recognize His present existence. We cannot repose believingly in the annihilated. We know something about Him. The more we know the better. (2) Faith will include assent to what comes to our knowledge respecting the Person, the Deliverer; not merely assent of the intellect, as to the proposition that once at Nazareth lived, and at Jerusalem died, such an one called Jesus.

[1] S. L. Wilson, *Helpful Words for Daily Life*, 59.

Assent of the understanding undoubtedly, but also of the emotions—of the conscience, of the will. (3) Faith in a Deliverer, presenting Himself as able and willing to save, offering to save us, will include acceptance of that offer. A curious and somewhat striking illustration of this is to be found even in the derivation of the word "believe." That word is kinsman to the German word *glauben.* And the ancestor of both words is a noun, signifying "hand." The simple, primitive idea of believing, then, is that of accepting a promise by the striking of hands, or that of putting into, or leaving in, the hands of another some vital and commanding interest. (4) On such acceptance there follows reliance; just such reliance as the patient places on the physician, the accused on his advocate, the scholar on his teacher, the liegeman on his king. At first the reliance is, that Christ will do such and such; but with advancing experience it becomes a reliance that Christ has done, is doing, great things for us, and will yet do greater things than these. (5) But faith in the Lord Jesus is of such a nature that it demands and implies obedience to His competent direction, the co-operation of our will with His will, the unifying of our whole nature with His perfect nature, a union close, energizing—not merely life-long—existence-long.

3. How does our trust save us? Our trust does not save us, it makes a way for Christ to save us. We commit and surrender ourselves to Him to be saved in His own way. But from the office it fills, the part it acts, and the results it produces, trust evidently includes some other element. Especially it includes the element of *sympathy.* "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the *fellowship* of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. iii. 8–11). Not only does the Apostle value the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord above all the advantages in which as a Jew he once gloried (enumerated in verses preceding), but he is in full and heartfelt sympathy with the way in which he has been saved in Christ. "That I may . . . be found in him"; which was to have, not his own righteousness, which was of the law, as the ground or procuring cause of his salvation,—which would have been another way than the way of grace and faith, even the way of works,—but the righteousness "which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"; that is, God's righteousness, which had been realized for him in Christ and was manifest in Christ's whole redeeming work.

¶ A distinguished man once said that in early manhood he found deliverance from a guilty passion through a devoted attachment to a branch of science. The saving potency of a true and pure love for a good man or woman has never been without its witnesses. Let a man's life be taken possession of by a great affection, and what will it not do for him?—cleanse his unclean heart, calm and chasten his hot and eager desires, bind him over to rectitude and faithfulness, and ever urge and keep him to his best. And it is just in this way Jesus Christ has been a Saviour to many in all lands and ages. The things named are not, of course, on the same level as the Christian attachment and loyalty, but they illustrate the same law—the redeeming energy of love—salvation through the quickening of a noble and commanding affection, love in the soul washing sin from the soul.[1]

[1] John Hunter.

An Unknown God.

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An Unknown God.

And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you.—Acts xvii. 22, 23.

1. The story of St. Paul's visit to Athens in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts gives us the points of contact and of difference between the philosophy of the ancient world and the gospel of Jesus Christ. The circumstances introduce the speech, whose brief outline of only about three hundred words is yet enough to show St. Paul's courage as a Christian and his skill as an orator. Adroit in conciliation, delicate in suggestion, thorough in its adaptation, simple and sweeping in its logic, issuing in that testimony of which he dare not be silent, and which is still the crux and the scandal of worldly wisdom—it is characteristic of St. Paul from first to last.

2. Silas and Timothy had been left behind at that Beroea where the Scriptures of the prophets had such honour, and, waiting for them all alone, Paul saw Athens where the only prophets are the poets. It was the city of Athene—goddess of skill and wisdom. All Hellenic art and story and worship and thought centred there. For what it was it stood peerless, supreme. Beautiful for situation, and adorned beyond the rivalry of all later ages, of vast intellectual prestige, of a never-satisfied mental curiosity—it was "the eye of Greece," and it is the wonder of time.

3. No man of ordinary taste and culture could stand in the midst of its glories without a feeling of æsthetic enthusiasm. Yet St. Paul was moved only by an intense pity and indignation. There was the Parthenon, beautified by the skill of Phidias and

Praxiteles; there the Areopagus, crowned with its colossal image of Mars; there were the famous schools of philosophy by the Ilissus. On every hand were images of gods and heroes. Pliny says that the city contained three thousand such effigies. It was a proverb, "There are more gods than men in Athens." The Apostle possibly walked down the Street of Hermes, where a winged figure adorned the front of every house, or along the Avenue of Tripods, lined on every side with votive offerings made by grateful athletes to the gods who had helped them in the games. Gods everywhere: gods on pedestals, in niches, at the corners of the streets—gods and demigods, good, bad, and indifferent—a wilderness of gods! And the heart of the Apostle was moved within him as he saw the city full of idols.

4. Over all was the breath of moral decay. Citizens and all comers alike were having leisure for nothing else than to tell or to hear some "newer thing." The latest novelty was the most welcome—*quid nunc?* Aristotle and Plato were long dead, and less noble forms of thought now ruled this city of discussion. And this degeneracy of thought showed the incompetency of even the loftiest type of unleavened human reason to resist the sensualism that seeks its end in pleasures, and the fatalism whose pride of aspiration finds its conclusion in despair. What philosophy as such could do, had there been done. Idolatry had exhausted invention. Priests, sacrifices, shrines, festal days, were always in evidence; but this capital of æsthetics was still hopelessly unsatisfied and restless—unhappy and impatient—and ritual had lost its earnestness.

> When love begins to sicken and decay,
> It useth an enforced ceremony.

5. There was no difficulty in getting an audience in this paradise of gossips and saunterers, with its shibboleth, "What's the news?" The Athenians quickly gathered about the Apostle—men, women, priests, and philosophers, all sorts and conditions of people. And he spoke to them of Jesus and the Resurrection, or as the Greeks had it, Jesus and Anastasia—a pair of new deities. He who introduced a god into Athens was counted a public benefactor. The interest of his audience was thus enchained at once.

To know, therefore, more of this peculiar doctrine, they led St. Paul to the Areopagus, a little rising ground within the city to the north-west of the market-place, so called from a celebrated temple upon it dedicated to Ares or Mars, in which was wont to meet a venerable body of senators, who formed a political and judicial council which also went by the name of the Areopagus. Eastward from this hill and temple of Mars was the acropolis or citadel, overlooking the whole city and crowned with the magnificent temple of Athene Promachos, the guardian or tutelary goddess, and other public edifices of rare architectural beauty. In every other quarter there were numerous temples and fanes filled with images of their gods. To win over the learned philosopher as well as the other intelligent and cultured citizens, St. Paul accommodated himself, as was his wont, to the time, place, and people.

I.

Gods Many.

"In all things I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious" (or "very religious," R.V. mg.).

1. Let us look at this word which St. Paul uses. It is very difficult to represent the meaning of the Greek word in our language. The Revised Version has modified the Authorized Version by introducing "somewhat" instead of "too," according to the classical idiom by which the comparative of an adjective may be used to express the deficiency or excess (slight in either case) of the quality contained in the positive. But the quality in this case may be good or bad, since the adjective *deisidaimon* and the cognate noun may be used of reverence or of superstition. In classic use the word appears very often in a good sense, and many authorities are agreed in taking it so here. But there is no reason to suppose that St. Paul's words were an accommodation to the usual practice of Athenian orators to commence with a mere compliment. At the same time it is possible that with delicate tact the Apostle made use of a word of doubtful meaning, which could not possibly provoke hostility at the outset, while it left unexpressed "with kindly ambiguity" his own judgment as to the nature of this reverence for the Divine.

2. Our modern atmosphere is charged to saturation with temptations to *overestimate the value of natural religions.* Let us all the more carefully arm ourselves against them. In warning us against this overestimate of natural religions, St. Paul may perhaps be allowed to give us also a name for it, by the employment of which we may possibly be able to put a new point on our self-admonitions. He calls it "Deisidaimonism." And perhaps, in the absence of a good translation, we may profitably adopt the Greek term to-day, with all its uncouthness of sound and its unlovely associations, and so enable ourselves to make a recognizable distinction between that general natural religiosity and its fruits, which we may call "deisidaimonism," and true religion, which is the product of the saving truth of God operating upon our native religious instincts and producing through them phenomena which owe all their value to the truth that gives them form.

¶ As you look out over the heathen world with its lords many and gods many, and see working in every form of faith the same religious aspirations, producing in varying measure indeed, but yet everywhere, to some extent, the same civilizing and moralizing effects—are you perhaps sometimes tempted to pronounce it enough; possibly adding something about the special adaptation of the several faiths to the several peoples, or even something about the essential truth underlying all religions? This is "deisidaimonism." And on its basis the whole missionary work of the Church is an impertinence, the whole history of the Church a gigantic error; the great commission itself a crime against humanity—launching the Christian world upon a fool's errand, every step of which has dripped with wasted blood. Surely the proclamation of the gospel is made, then, mere folly, and the blood of the martyrs becomes only the measure of the narrow fanaticism of earlier and less enlightened times.[1]

¶ On the other hand, there is an attitude to other religions which has hindered the progress of Christianity. It is the attitude of ignorance and contempt. By unduly depreciating all other religions we have placed our own in a position which its Founder never intended for it; we have torn it away from the sacred context of the history of the world; we have ignored, or wilfully narrowed, the sundry times and divers manners in which, in times past, God spake unto the fathers by the prophets; and instead of recognizing Christianity as coming in the fulness of time, and as

[1] B. B. Warfield.

the fulfilment of the hopes and desires of the whole world, we have brought ourselves to look upon its advent as the only broken link in that unbroken chain which is rightly called the Divine government of the world.[1]

II.

An Unknown God.

"I found also an altar with this inscription, *To an unknown God.*"

1. At first sight it would appear that when the Athenians had erected an altar to every possible god that they knew or could think of, hardly content with their efforts to stand well with heaven, they then proceeded to something further. Lest they might unwittingly have overlooked or omitted some deity that expected their votive offering, and that they were bound to worship, with a pious zeal which the Apostle could not but admire they erected yet another altar which they left unappropriated. But not to leave the entablature of this altar entirely blank, they filled it in provisionally with this strange dedication: To an unknown God.

¶ The feeling of an uneasy conscience is shown similarly in the Penitential Psalm which a Babylonian king, about 760 B.C., addressed to his offended deity—

> Against a God, known and unknown,
> I have committed errors, I have multiplied rebellions:
> I am afraid, I dread the look of Thy divinity.[2]

2. God is to-day to a very large number of men, some of them men of culture and influence, an unknown God. And that openly, argumentatively. They hold that God cannot be known. They have even invented a title for their attitude to God, calling it *Agnosticism.* But agnosticism is not something that simply affects religion, it is something that affects all life. The only men who have ever done anything worth doing in the world are men who have acted from deep and profound conviction; and if we are to-day to have an agnostic age, then it is a very bad look-out for those who want to see the life of their country grow more

[1] Max Müller. [2] A. Smythe Palmer.

noble, more humane, more just and more free. You can see the effect of agnosticism to-day from the top of the life of this country to the bottom. It has affected politics. We are in an age of "unsettled convictions." All the vacillations and hesitations of to-day are very largely the result of the fact that we have been losing our hold of the great driving principles that made humanity advance in the days gone by.

¶ The contrast is striking between the light humour of Matthew Arnold's prose writings and the gloom of his poetry. In the poems, which are so admirable in their way, one may not doubt that his inmost feeling finds expression. There pervades them a tone of sadness—a sadness without remedy and without solace. Faith gone, the fountains of joy are dry. And yet he sees that the millions—

> have such need of joy!
>
> The want of the world is——
>
> One mighty wave of thought and joy lifting mankind amain.

But the poet sees no ground of hope. He has no counsel to give to mortals, in their unquenchable yearning for bliss, but to "moderate desire," to be content with what a few days on earth may yield. A lesson may be read in Tennyson the reverse of the despairing inference of Arnold—

> My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live for evermore,
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is;
>
> This round of green, this orb of flame,
> Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
> In some wild Poet, when he works
> Without a conscience or an aim.

¶ You can feel the sort of pessimism and scepticism which is round about us, in the very literature of the land. One man said the other day, that the poets who used to sing the Divine hope into the heart of man are singing agnosticism, pessimism, scepticism. John Davidson writes—

> Sunset and sunrise came,
> The seasons passed, the years went slowly by,
> But still to me the Universe was dumb.

William Watson describes his search for the voice of God, and this is how he concludes—

> Above the cloud, beneath the sod,
> The Unknown God, the Unknown God.

And that is all. And Swinburne, most brilliant of all, says this—

> We have said to the dreams that caressed us,
> The terrors that smote us—good-night and good-bye.

"Good-night and good-bye" to every dream of God that ever came to men in the form of religion! "Good-night and good-bye" to the summons of your God to a holier life, and the offer of God of forgiveness, courage, peace, and all things that make life worth living! Oh, how different it is from the men who spoke to the generation that has just gone by—a bigger generation, take it all in all, than ours. Listen: there was Browning describing himself as a man who was very sure of God. You know the story how a lady once, towards the end of his life, asked him about his faith. And he quoted three lines of his own—

> That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Become my universe that feels and knows.

And then he added: "That is the Face of Christ, and that is how I feel it." And when a man has looked up into the face of Christ like that, he has got something to teach us then that is worth teaching—very much better than to teach us to say to the dream that caressed and the terror that smote us "Good-night and good-bye."[1]

III.

The Only Living and True God.

"What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this set I forth unto you."

1. Notice how St. Paul meets his hearers on their own ground. He recognized a form of genuine piety (so the word used in the original Greek for "worship" implies) as shown in the existence

[1] C. Silvester Horne.

of the altar. "That *Divine nature* which you worship," he says, "not knowing *what it is* (notice, he did not say 'ignorantly worship,' as in the Authorized Version), this very thing *I* set forth to you." In these words lay the answer to the charge that he was a "babbler," a "setter forth of strange gods." "I" is emphatic: I whom you regard as a mere babbler proclaim to you, or set forth, the object which you recognize however dimly, and worship however imperfectly.

2. It was a bold thing that St. Paul did when he stood up to tell the men of Athens the nature of the true God. The philosophers of an earlier time, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, had had splendid visions of the truth, but they had not done much to enlighten the people. In the world of St. Paul's day there were "gods many and lords many"; and yet there was nothing that the world of St. Paul's day so greatly needed as *the knowledge of the true God.*

3. There is nothing that the world of our own day more greatly needs than the knowledge of the true God. For it is only the thought of a God, present indeed within, but in every respect above us, that can uplift humanity and lead it onwards to its goal. Present-day philosophy seeks to support religion, but its exponents have such disputations amongst themselves that those who have not specialized in their lore scarce know what to make of it. They seem all to have a measure of truth, but none of them, perhaps, the whole truth. But, although we may have doubts as to how far "the Absolute" of some modern philosophers can answer to the idea of "God," whether indeed it be not a gulf rather than a God, it is cheering to see how almost all, whether Absolute or Personal Idealists, Ideal Realists, Spiritual Monists or Pluralists, Pragmatists or Humanists, seek to maintain in their own way the reality of God, the value of Faith and Religion, of Freedom and Immortality, without meaning to sacrifice either Divine or human personality.

4. Not only the old Atheism but even Agnosticism is already being left behind. There may be a good deal of practical undefined agnosticism. But the theologian, and the person whose direct interest is religion, will do well to hold fast to the fact of

Revelation; only it must be more broadly and more truly conceived. We can know God *only in so far as He reveals Himself*. He is partly revealed in nature; but if we stop with nature we shall come short of the knowledge of a God who is really higher than ourselves. For man is more than nature. St. Paul certainly pointed the Athenians to God as the Creator of the world who, just because He is "Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing that he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." He declared His omnipresence and nearness to all, "for in him we live and move and have our being"; and he quoted the saying of certain of their own poets: "For we are also his offspring." So far, his teaching might be expressed in terms of the Eastern fable of the fishes who sought to behold the sea—

> O ye who seek to solve the knot,
> Ye live in God, yet know Him not;
> Ye sit upon the river's brink,
> Yet crave in vain a drop to drink;
> Ye dwell beside a countless store,
> Yet perish hungry at the door.

The revelation of God in nature is that of an omnipresent, all-embracing, all-working Power, an Infinite Reason which is manifested in the unvarying order of the world.

5. How are we to find the true God?

(1) St. Paul teaches us that in order to find God we must get at the true idea of God. The faculty of religion in the Athenians was keen but uninformed. St. Paul set forth the true object of worship, first, as "Maker of the world," or in their own language "the cosmos," with all the order and beauty, adaptation and design, harmony and conspiring motions and uses of all inanimate existences and living beings in it. And He is not only the Creator, who, having once completed His work, and arranged for its maintenance, has left it to go on by itself, like a man who constructs some curious contrivance to go for an indefinite period, and takes no further care of it. But just as He constructed, so He continues to superintend the evolutions and workings of this

huge machine of the universe. He presides at the helm of providence. He is "the Lord," the possessor and master of heaven and earth. And being so great, and high, and infinite, of Almighty power, spirituality, and prescience, He necessarily could not dwell in temples made with hands. Neither could He be served or ministered to by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all creatures life, and breath, and whatever else may be necessary for their sustenance and continuance. So that the Athenians must henceforth attach to their idea of God the predicates of daily and direct providence, together with a spirituality and omnipotence ever at work, energizing throughout the length and breadth of creation, as well as the predicate of original creative power.

(2) But more than this, man everywhere is by creation the son of God. All nations of men who dwell on the broad earth must acknowledge the one Fatherhood. No one particular people, neither the Greeks, nor their Roman conquerors, neither the Jews, nor any other, could engross to themselves the Divine favour. All were brothers, of whatever race or language, without exception, bearing in their make and constitution the Divine impress, endowed with that faculty of religion, in virtue of which they were all drawn to seek after God, if haply they might feel His presence, and discover His working in the creation around, and in the providence over them, since He was at all times immediately near, present in their hearts in the power of His love and holiness. The great Father of men had been schooling and disciplining His children, through the whole course of history, by the varied dispensations of His providence. He had fixed the bounds and determined the ages and periods of human life, both in single persons and in nations. Jew, and Greek, and heathen alike had been tending and hastening toward the goal of human history, the advent of the Redeemer, and the promulgation of a wholly spiritual and universal religion, in which the ideas of the one fatherhood, and sonship, and brotherhood of the human family would be finally realized. Knowing, therefore, so much of God, and of our relation and dependence upon Him, for "we are also his offspring," it was not reasonable to think that the spirituality and infinity of the Deity could be worthily represented by figures, or images, or material symbols of any sort, although

men everywhere have fondly endeavoured to realize His presence under some visible emblem or form.

(3) Further, St. Paul went on to declare that in Jesus Christ God had revealed Himself in His moral character, as the God of Righteousness. If in the past He had seemed to slumber, He was now awake; if He had overlooked the ignorance of the past, He would do so no longer; for He had "appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he had ordained; whereof he had given assurance to all men in that he had raised him from the dead." Righteousness was the ruling passion in St. Paul's soul, and as he looked around on that world of many gods and of much wickedness, his spirit was mightily stirred to declare to it a God of Righteousness who should judge the world righteously.

(4) And this righteous God is both immanent and transcendent. He is *immanent*. The revelation of the true God in Christ teaches us that man is God's organ, God's son, to learn and to give expression to the will of his Father. The reason why the world is not better than it is, and why individual lives often remain on such a low level, is because men have been looking too exclusively to a God outside themselves, slow to learn where the living God is, or, having learned, reluctant to do His will—perhaps because it called for sacrifice. The power of the revelation of God in Christ is in the fact that Jesus stopped not short of the complete sacrifice of Himself in order to do the Will of God. So entirely was He one with God, so completely was He the Continuator of the Divine working in the world. Moreover, since it was the very life of God that moved in Christ—God as the living God—we see God Himself in Christ accepting and submitting to the actual order of the Universe, and in that Divine silence which makes human life often seem so dark and tragical, enduring the worst that man can do to man, suffering the result in this life of the sin of humanity. In this light we see that the actual order is an absolutely necessary one—necessary for the making of man and for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes concerning him; therefore, one to be accepted, not only in submission, but in faith and hope.

¶ The belief in God's Fatherhood is the belief in the immanence of God. It is the faith that His interests are bound up with the interests of the tiny sparrow, maimed by a stone from some

ruthless hand, and perishing in its pain, as surely as with the spiritual progress of Augustine or St. Paul or the genius of Shakespeare. If a sparrow could fall to the ground without God, then one would have very little confidence in the Divine dealings with the greatest soul. A God unjust to a sparrow would be unjust to all. But if God is really the principle, both differentiating and integrating, that made and guides and informs the whole universe, that is the glory of the wayside flower, and of the farthest star; if the hurt sparrow dies into the life that gave it being, then we have hope for the sparrow and for the souls of men. The universe was not cast off by God, to plunge itself into this terrible travail—conflict and anguish and death—without Him. His life and thought are in the slayer and the slain. At the last analysis of inorganic or organic matter we come to God. It is our name for the sum of Being—the All in All.[1]

He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours:
We feel Him, nor by painful reason know!
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
All changes at His instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon His world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty? To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there.[2]

But the revelation in Christ shows us that the true God is also *transcendent*—everywhere present. He was not merely within Jesus by His Spirit, He was at the same time the Father to whom Jesus prayed and whose will He ever sought to do. Immanence is not identity. Man is not himself God, nor the only temple of His presence. Otherwise there would be no God *above* us to worship, and whose will it is ours to do. As Eckhardt (who has often been accused of the Pantheism which he here opposes) says: "The fundamental thought is the real distinction between God and the world, together with their real inseparability; for only really distinct elements can interpenetrate each other." As with

[1] May Kendall. [2] Browning, *Luria*.

the growing plant, its life-principle is at once *in* it as the vital energy (spirit of life) which it obeys in its development, and *above* it as the Ideal to be realized in its perfection, so is it with man in relation to God. As Jesus taught, the ideal of our life is nothing short of God Himself in the form of sonship towards Him and likeness to Him. It is only when this ideal is reached that man is "one with God," and that in man the immanent Divine is one with the transcendent. It was this that was realized in Christ and manifested in the culmination of His life in the sacrifice of the Cross.

¶ What we need so much for our life is to believe in and realize this *presence of God*, both as a Holy Spirit within us and as the Infinite Spirit "around us ever." His presence within makes itself felt in that something that would always lift us higher and lead us to follow and act out that *Best* which has ever the supreme claim upon us. His presence without is revealed in the Providence that orders our life, in that higher Will which we cannot alter or resist, in trustful acceptance of which in *everything* we alone can have peace; and in that Greater, Wiser, and Better than ourselves whom the heart craves for, and whom it finds in prayer, on whom we can cast our burdens and be sustained, to whom our labouring souls can come and find rest, to whom we can commit our way, ourselves, and all persons and interests we are concerned for, and find "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. "Little children," writes the Apostle, "keep yourselves from idols." This is the true God and eternal life. We cannot *see* God, but

> High above the limits of my seeing
> And folded far within the inmost heart,
> And deep below the deeps of conscious being,
> Thy splendour shineth; there, O God, Thou art.[1]

[1] W. L. Walker.

The Beatitude of the Giver.

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The Beatitude of the Giver.

In all things I gave you an example, how that so labouring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—Acts xx. 35.

This is a golden saying of our Lord's, snatched for us from oblivion (for it is not found anywhere in the Gospels) by the inspired Apostle, and handed down by him for the use of the Church in every age, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Very honestly St. Paul could press it on the regard of the Ephesian elders; for his own life, his whole apostolic life, had been an exemplification of it. And it was well that it was so. For, so contrary is the saying to the practice at least—the whole spirit and practical judgments—of men, that when a public teacher declares that he is more happy in giving than in receiving, the question is apt to arise in the minds of his hearers, Does he really believe it?

I.

The Example of St. Paul.

1. The interest with which we study the text attaches chiefly to the saying of Jesus which St. Paul quotes; but we might notice first the remarkable immediate use or application of it by the Apostle. We are told elsewhere that he had learned a craft, that of tent-making, and had worked at it for his living at Corinth. But the most noticeable point in his reference to this fact is not merely that he had thus supported himself, but that he had thereby ministered to those that were with him; and he tells the elders of Ephesus that so labouring they also ought to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

2. It is true that of worldly goods the Apostle had but little

to give. But his very poverty was only a nobler exemplification of the saying. And as to all other kinds of giving, his whole apostolic life was spent in the spirit of those words. For example: "I will not be burdensome to you, for I seek not yours, but you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Surely that was giving. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I gave you an example in all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

¶ The Rabbinical law required that every Jew should be taught a trade. St. Paul, therefore, being able to support himself by his own labour, did not ask for material reward, and was free to turn the main stream of his energy into the channel of service. His life is our assurance that true happiness does not lie in anything outside the man. It has been the common aim of every pure religion, and of every great teacher in the world, to undermine practical materialism, and to warn us that only in the soul itself is the secret of content. It may be questioned whether we have learnt the lesson. We still catch at the imaginary delights with which life tries to cheat us; we still dream of a happiness which, if not now, can never be ours; we still find something paradoxical in St. Paul's saying, though it is in fact as simply true as the converse saying of Socrates, that he who commits an injustice does harm only to himself. It is a simple truth, verified by common experience, and, like every fundamental truth of Christianity, rooted in a psychological law. Imagine a man, comparatively poor and friendless, inheriting or gradually winning a magnificent estate. Does he add to his *pleasure* in life? Alas! he adds absolutely nothing. His conservatories with their wealth of flowers will never charm him more than "the yellow primrose" which was the passion of his youth; the great library

with its store of books will never give him the exquisite relish of those few tattered volumes which first stirred his intellectual thirst. He may have added to his opportunities of pleasure; he may have changed the objects of his pleasure; he may have found roads to new pleasures, once unknown; but his *capacity* for pleasure he cannot change. That is a constant force. It is the same, though in another sphere. What he gains here, he loses there. In everything there is compensation. He wins a high position—good; but then, with the position comes a responsibility from which he was free before. He attains great wealth; but wealth also has its responsibilities. The higher he rises, the more delicate and difficult, as a rule, his work becomes; and while he secures more honour, he rarely wins more peace.[1]

¶ "I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state"—so she was pleased to ramble on—"in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it. Do you remember the brown suit which you made to hang upon you till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating* you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man?"[2]

¶ There is more happiness, more satisfaction, a truer life, and

[1] S. A. Alexander. [2] Charles Lamb, *The Last Essays of Elia*, 170.

more obtained from life, in the cottages of the poor than in the homes of the rich.[1]

I pitied one whose tattered dress
Was patched, and stained with dust and rain;
He smiled on me; I could not guess
The viewless spirit's wide domain.

He said, "The royal robe I wear
Trails all along the fields of light:
Its silent blue and silver bear
For gems the starry dust of night.

The breath of Joy unceasingly
Waves to and fro its folds starlit,
And far beyond earth's misery
I live and breathe the joy of it."[2]

II.

The Great Maxims of the Great Teachers.

"Ye ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus."

1. We have all heard of the seven wise men of Greece, who laid the foundations of philosophy in some pithy maxim or phrase, such as, "Suretyship is the precursor of ruin," "Know thy opportunity," "Man, know thyself," and "Nothing too much." Of these maxims the last two were unquestionably great and fruitful thoughts. The motto, "Know thyself," was regarded by the ancients as an inspired, heaven-sent thought, and was honoured with a place on the walls of the temple at Delphi. It turned the great mind of Socrates from natural to moral philosophy; from the investigation of nature and her laws to the investigation of man and his duty. The maxim, "Nothing too much," easily expanded into the philosophy of Epicurus, and is echoed over and over again in the pages of Horace and countless subsequent writers. But giving the fullest value to the maxims which have secured for these sages an immortality of fame, there is not one of them that can compare for a moment with this great saying of Christ, which is the subject of the text. It

[1] Andrew Carnegie. [2] "A. E."

is strange that it is recorded by no evangelist, and seems only saved from oblivion by a casual quotation. It is strange, because if this saying were the single remnant of the teaching and life of Christ, it would place Him far above the pioneers of Greek philosophy. It is a brilliant paradox as well as a profound truth; for, as has already been noticed, the world's verdict is otherwise. It is more blessed to receive than to give; more blessed to win, to gain, to take, to treasure; that is, that *must* be, the verdict of the world—of all those whose guiding principle is selfishness, or even worldly prudence and worldly considerations.

¶ Depend upon it, if any one of you has this principle of Christ naturally planted in his heart, he has to thank Providence for instincts of phenomenal excellence. We are born into this world in a state of helpless dependence. We are in no condition to give or to do. Nature bestows on infants no capacities beyond the power to make their wants known, and to insist on their being supplied. Love, devotion, tender solicitude, watch over our cradle, divine our wants, anticipate our wishes. What can be more natural than for the dawning intelligence of boys or girls to regard these things as their right? to consider that parents and servants were created to minister to their wishes and wants? I do not believe it ever came into the heart of any man that he was sent into this world not to be ministered unto but to minister to others—to sacrifice himself, and not other people—except through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. In this maxim of Christ's lies the key to the kingdom of heaven. This key alone can open the door to real nobility, to real heavenliness of character. The thought in it lies at the bottom of every noble life and of every noble deed.[1]

2. It should be noticed that the personal pronoun is emphatic (the Revised Version, by inserting *himself*, has given the correct rendering of the original Greek): "How he himself said" implies that the fact was beyond all doubt. We may note one distinctive feature in Christian philanthropy, that it is based upon allegiance to a divine Person, and upon a reference to a divine Person, and upon a reference to His commands. The emphatic personal pronoun seems to forbid the view that the Apostle is simply giving the *sense* of some of our Lord's sayings.

[1] A. W. Potts, *School Sermons*, 228.

What can I give Him,
  Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
  I would bring a lamb,
If I were a wise man
  I would do my part—
Yet what I can I give Him,
  Give my heart.[1]

III.

The Words of the Lord Jesus.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

From what source St. Paul obtained this, the only saying of our Lord, definitely so described, outside the four Gospels, we cannot tell, but the command to "remember" shows that the words must have been familiar words, like those from St. Clement and St. Polycarp, which are very similar to the utterance of the Sermon on the Mount. From whatever source they are derived, references in the Apostolic Fathers show how deep an impression they made upon the mind of the Church.

i. It is blessed to receive.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Our Lord said "*more* blessed." Then it is blessed to receive. Until we know the blessedness of "receiving," we cannot appreciate the higher blessedness of "giving." There is no antithesis here between the blessedness of giving and the *non*-blessedness of receiving. The comparison which our Lord made was between the greater and the less, between the higher and lower forms of blessedness. Oriental mysticism, Buddhist legends, have urged the hyperbole of self-sacrifice for its own sake, and have stumbled into this veritable pit of pessimism. The Lord Christ illumined the profoundest problems of ethics and the true secret of the religious life, when He said: "It is *more* blessed to give than to receive"; "freely ye have received, freely give."

1. *It is blessed simply to receive Nature's gifts*, even before we

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

can apprehend their full complexity, their lavish abundance, their anticipation of our desires, their hidden secrets, and their boundless possibilities. All the progress of man is measured by the degree to which he has appreciated and received, discovered and utilized, the free gifts of God in nature. When man first understood what Nature had done for him in offering him the flower and fruit and seed of corn, then began the harvest of the world. When human intelligence understood what was involved in the chalk-beds and coal-fields and mineral wealth at man's feet; when he grasped the meaning of fire and lightning, and the contents of water and air; when he thus received these treasured forces and boundless provisions of nature; when he began to "receive" and utilize the energies which had been moulding the world for untold centuries—then science took its birth. If we stubbornly refuse to receive the light of heaven, we stumble blindfold into the pitfalls at our side. Should we refuse to receive our daily bread, or put it from us with suicidal hand, we perish. Furthermore, Nature lavishes upon us, together with these elementary gifts, appeals to our higher and more subtle desires, awakens them by her magic touch, and gives us the sense of beauty, truth, and goodness. The surpassing loveliness of much of Nature's work must be *received* by those who have the eyes and the ears of the spirit opened to perceive it.

¶ All that Art has ever done to soften and beautify the career of man upon earth, has been to record the high joy, or subtle pain akin to bliss, which the perception and reception of the glory of Nature has given to a comparatively few elect souls. The great artists and poets, musicians and sculptors, have so embodied their strong emotions in abiding form and material, that others may learn from them the blessed secret of receiving the mystery of beauty, and accepting some of the truth and goodness of its eternal Source.[1]

Oh, give thyself to the kind grey day
That doth not bargain nor betray!
  The tranquil stream
Shall hallow thy dream;
The grasses dry
Divine thy sigh;
And the withered weed
Thy need;

[1] H. R. Reynolds.

The silent trees
Shall give heart's ease,
Shall dower thee with soft distances,
Vistas of soul tranquillities;
Ah, the silent trees
Appease!
Thy heart shall render due reply
To the quiet of earth and the peace of sky;
Yea, the grey, mysterious depths of the day
Shall fashion thy soul, in a secret way,
To meet Infinity;
If thou wilt yield thee to the day
That doth not bargain nor betray.

2. All human love is a ministration of Divine love. Human tenderness is but the channel cut by Providence through which the rivers of God's pleasure flow. God lavishes His own love upon us through the hearts and by the hands of those who love. Now, *it is blessed to receive human love, and the gifts of love.* Self-sacrifice would be a form of selfishness, if it monopolized all the blessedness of the process. See the child with its hands full of birthday gifts, intense joy lighting its eye, almost bursting the tiny heart. If the little one had no blessedness in receiving father's, mother's, and sister's tokens of love, and found no joy in its new riches, if such were thrown idly away and conveyed no thrill of bliss, the grace of giving would be doubtful. Sometimes pride of spirit refuses to be beholden to another, resenting the sense of obligation. But all beneficence would be dried at its source, all philanthropy and evangelism at home and abroad would sicken and die, if there were no blessedness in receiving the streams of living water which are always pouring forth from human hearts.

There lives a glory in these sweet June days
  Such as I found not in the years gone by,
  A kindlier meaning in the unclouded sky,
A tenderer whisper in the woodland ways;
And I have understanding of the lays,
  The birds are singing, forasmuch as I
  Have learned how love avails to satisfy
A man's whole heart, and fills his lips with praise.

The morning air is laden with the scent
Of roses; and within my garden grows
A rosebud that shall some day be a rose,
Whose bloom and perfume never shall be spent—
The flower of love: and he who hath it knows
The endless summer of complete content.[1]

3. The most impressive illustration of the principle is *the blessedness of receiving the grace of God.* The secret of receiving from the living God what is neither earned nor merited, and, moreover, that to which we cannot lay the smallest claim; nay, further, that which we have madly, meanly, gracelessly, forfeited, is a secret which some are slow to learn. Human pride comes in and resents unmerited compassion, and disputes the necessity for mercy. Philosophy helps to minimize the peril of sin, and a shallow science throws all the blame of sin on nature or matter or on God Himself. The blessedness of receiving Christ's supreme gift is disputed, because it involves too severe a self-scrutiny. The flesh which crucified *Him* once, resists the crucifying process when faith begins to drive the nails into its own quivering hands. The world must be crucified by the cross of Christ, but the world in our hearts dies hard.

Thou sayest, "Fit me, fashion me for Thee."
Stretch forth thine empty hands, and be thou still;
O restless soul, thou dost but hinder Me
By valiant purpose and by steadfast will,
Behold the summer flowers beneath the sun,
In stillness His great glory they behold;
And sweetly thus His mighty work is done,
And resting in His gladness they unfold.
So are the sweetness and the joy divine
Thine, O beloved, and the work is Mine.[2]

ii. It is more blessed to give.

1. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." These golden words of Christ admit and enforce all that has been said about receiving, but they authoritatively proclaim a deeper truth, and promise a blessedness which surpasses that of receiving from nature

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems*, 87.
[2] Gerhardt Tersteegen, trans. by Frances Bevan.

and human love their best gifts, or even that of receiving Divine grace. Can any reason be assigned for such a sweeping and comprehensive inversion of all ordinary maxims? Why should the bestowal of joy be a greater blessedness to the giver than to the receiver?

2. Our Lord does not say it is more natural or more pleasant. He lifts our thoughts into a new region. He appeals to the spiritual and the eternal. He bids us consider the issue and the permanence of conduct. And we cannot understand His words till we feel that they are of universal application. The principle is not to be limited to the material bestowal of alms, to the help of the needy and the suffering. It does indeed apply here, but in such cases we can see that the power of giving involves an obvious superiority, an abundance of resources, a freedom from distress, which tend to hide the true nature of the benediction. The blessedness of which the Lord speaks is far deeper than ease and comfort. The giving which He contemplates is not measured by any outward standard. The spirit which the giving embodies finds countless forms under which it shows itself. It reaches through the whole fabric of our lives. It is true of thought, true of feeling, true of action, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And this blessedness is not for one, but for all. We can all be givers as we are all receivers. In the unity of the State he who gives recognizes in giving that he himself receives, and he who receives learns to give even in receiving.

(1) Few things can be more delightful than to enrich the mind with new truths; to apprehend a little more clearly than before the laws by which the world is governed; to discern a little more intelligently the marvels of beauty which lie everywhere about our feet; to rise to a larger understanding of the conditions of human progress; to feel that we have made our own that which great men have established for the ennobling and the enlightening of life. Few things can be more delightful, but our experience will teach us that at least one thing is—if ever we have been enabled to make some simple fact plainer to a learner, to bring from our treasures a thought which another has required; to expose a falsehood which a friend has unwarily admitted; to see the seed of good which we have scattered ripening to a

fruitful harvest. We compare the two joys of learning and teaching, both pure, and generous, and abiding, and our judgment is beyond appeal. *In thought, it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

(2) No one, again, can be insensible to the deep joy which comes from feeling that others love us: that there are those who wait with watchful eagerness to render to us offices of kindly ministry; to serve the cause which we embrace; to follow where we lead; to yield their own wills to our judgment. Such tender and brave devotion enlarges the scope of our life, and multiplies the powers of our action. As a nature is generous and lofty, such devotion disciplines and purifies it. But there is something higher still. To love is better, nobler, more elevating, and more sure, than to be loved. To love is to have found that which lifts us above ourselves, which makes us capable of sacrifice, which unseals the forces of another world. He who is loved has gained the highest tribute of earth. He who loves has entered into the spirit of heaven. The love which comes to us must always be alloyed with the sad sense of our own unworthiness. The love which goes out from us is kept bright by the ideal to which it is directed. *In feeling, it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

(3) In the daily conduct of life we grow stronger and more courageous when we know that a host of fellow-workers are furthering the labours in which we are busy. Their force sustains us when we faint. Their energy inspires us with enthusiasm. Their example stirs us to rivalry. We need not wish to disparage the greatness of the debt which we owe to friends and fellow-citizens, or to lessen the gladness of gratitude. But what then? He who has turned aside from the march of the great army to bring help to one who has fallen, he who has yielded a foremost place that he might restore another, has felt something of *the joy of his Lord*, the joy of absolute self-surrender, and known that there is a priceless victory in what seems to be failure in the eyes of men. *In action, it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

¶ Giving is "twice blest." The natives of Australia have a curious weapon called a boomerang, which they are able to throw from them in such a way as to make it return to them again.

Every gift is a boomerang; it returns to the giver in blessing. When Thomas Carlyle was six years of age he found this out. An old man came to the door begging. Carlyle was alone; there was no food in the house, but, asking the man to wait, the little lad got his "penny-pig" off the shelf, broke it, and gave the old man all the money it contained. "And," said he, "I never knew before what the joy of heaven was like."

> Who shuts his hand, hath lost his gold:
> Who opens it, hath it twice told.[1]

¶ The Rev. S. Vincent, of Plymouth, has told of an aged man in the hospital, whose wife came to see him once a week. They were very poor, and it cost one shilling and fourpence each journey. One week she brought the copy of the *Missionary Herald*, and read the appeal for greater funds; and after prayer, though the weekly visit was their one ray of sunshine, and could not be often repeated because the man was near death, yet they decided to miss one week that the one shilling and fourpence might go to the missionary society.

> He who bends to himself a joy
> Does the winged life destroy;
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in eternity's sunrise.[2]

¶ I know you are not over-fond of Moore: *I* hate his politics, but he is a very amusing companion.

I must tell you one of his stories, because, as Sir Walter Scott is the hero of it, I know it will not be unacceptable to you. When George IV. went to Ireland, one of the "pisintry," delighted with his affability to the crowd on landing, said to the toll-keeper as the King passed through—

"Och, now! and His Majesty, God bless him, never paid the turnpike! an' how's that?"

"Oh! Kings never does: we lets 'em go free," was the answer.

"Then there's the dirty money for ye," says Pat. "It shall never be said that the King came here, and found nobody to pay the turnpike for him."

Moore, on his visit to Abbotsford, told this story to Sir Walter, when they were comparing notes as to the two royal visits.

"Now, Mr. Moore," replied Scott, "there ye have just the

[1] G. Herbert. [2] W. Blake.

advantage of us. There was no want of enthusiasm here: the Scotch folk would have done anything in the world for his Majesty, but—pay the turnpike."[1]

"We might all of us give far more than we do, without being a bit the worse;
It was never yet loving that emptied the heart, or giving that emptied the purse,
We must be like the woman our Saviour praised, and do but the best we can."
"Ay, that'll be just the plan, neighbour, that'll be just the plan."[2]

IV.

The Example of Jesus.

We began by studying the example of St. Paul, let us end with a higher example. If you would see this saying exemplified in its perfection, you must go to his Master—to the utterer of the saying. Even St. Paul was behind Him who "was rich, and for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich!"—behind Him who "was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" St. Paul was behind Him who, in uttering the saying without reference to Himself, might yet have written in it the motto of His life, from Bethlehem to Calvary and the grave—"It is more blessed to give than to receive!"

¶ You have seen church windows painted with scenes from our Lord's life, and, although they may be but imperfectly executed, they enable you to realize those divine facts better than a sermon could do. Let us stand in imagination before such a window now, and look with reverence and attention at some of the acts of the Incarnate Life, as a commentary upon the text.

(1) There, then, first is Bethlehem. Round the manger cradle only His mother and foster-father Joseph are standing, with the

[1] R. H. D. Barham, *The Life and Letters of the Rev. Richard Harris Barham*, 207.

[2] Dora Greenwell.

shepherds and the cattle, where "he made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant." Look at the Child lying therein who is yet the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Where are the robes of majesty, His sceptre and His crown? where the Divine Glory which He had with the Father before the world was? where the legions of angels, warders, and ministers of the palace where Jehovah dwells? All for the time laid aside, left behind Him, given up. In the Heaven of Heavens the seven lamps are glowing, as for evermore the Throne is exalted, and before it are worshipping those who do, without swerving, the will of God perfectly; the Presence Chamber is ringing with the Hymn of the Seraphim and the strains of harps of gold; while the King of the Palace has come down from Heaven, has emptied Himself of His glory—"is made Man."

(2) We pass on to the next subject, the Central Light of the windows. What does Calvary say to us, Calvary with its Cross and Him that hangs thereon? What do we read in the Eyes so full of anguish yet of infinite love, in the Hands stretched out, the Body racked and pierced, in the purple stream of Life-blood, in the surrendered Spirit? What but this—while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life. And this life He surrenders as a voluntary gift. "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again, no man taketh it from me."

(3) Our third and last picture, bright with a triumphant light, carries us forth in spirit to the Mount of Olives. From the green slopes of the hillside Christ has gone up, and the little knot of men to whom He has been more than Master, Teacher, and Brother, stand gazing wistfully up into Heaven. Do they behold the radiance gleaming from the outermost rank of the heavenly host, and catch the welcoming smile on angel faces as they receive their returning and victorious King? Do they hear the last echoes wafted down the waves of space, echoes of that mighty chorus of the ten thousand times ten thousand joyful spirits, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates"? And if they did, and if their sad hearts followed Jesus yet as He passes onward to the Throne, must it not have seemed as if a great gulf had opened between them and their Lord, and that a bereaved and weary and impoverished life alone remained with them? And what is the reassuring message sent down to them? "The same Jesus shall so come"—the same Jesus who taught, healed, and died for you, shall come. And meanwhile, as He is seated above, God of God, Light of Light, He is not unmindful of His own. Why did He

ascend up, why again receive His glory, but that He might prepare a place for us, that He might send the Comforter to us, that He might "receive gifts" for us, that in a word He might write above the Great White Throne itself, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"?[1]

[1] E. C. Paget.

The Lash of the Law.

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The Lash of the Law.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.—Acts xxiv. 25.

I.

Waiting for the Sermon.

1. The scene of this incident was Cæsarea. The sermon was preached in the presence of Felix, the Roman governor of the province. Look at him, as he sits there, with a woman of extraordinary beauty at his side. He has made her his own by ruthlessly breaking up the domestic circle of another. She is only eighteen years of age; a princess by birth, and, though she knew it not, soon to die. She was a Jewess by nation, and there was at that time a Jew in prison at Cæsarea, for Christ's sake. What more natural than that Drusilla should wish to break in upon the tedium of official life by hearing Paul plead? Felix had told her of the speech of the orator Tertullus, and of Paul's answer. Her curiosity was stirred; she wished to see and hear this countryman of hers, whose fame was so widely spread. And so it was arranged that Paul should appear before Felix and Drusilla.

2. It needs courage to preach to only one or two persons. There are those who can preach to the crowd. It takes a man with the vision of the Cross to preach to two people. It takes courage to preach to the man who sits in a high position, when he is close to you, when he is in his own house and you are sitting at his table, or in his own room face to face.

3. It was the glory of St. Paul that he "became all things to all men"; we are here helped to understand what he meant by

this boast. Had he seen before him one of the weary and heavy-laden—a Philippian jailor, crying out of the depth of a contrite and penitent heart, "What must I do to be saved?"—the Apostle would have changed his voice, would have brought other things out of his treasure-house. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"—so had he reasoned of the faith in Christ to him. But he saw none such here; on the contrary, a proud stout-hearted sinner, sitting in the seat of judgment, but executing unrighteous judgment there, and to this man "he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come."

II.

The Appropriate Sermon.

The details of the argument we do not know, the heads we do. Probably there would be an appeal to the Jewish Scriptures, with which Drusilla could not fail to be familiar; probably also to the Stoic and Epicurean maxims which floated in the then atmosphere of Roman thought, and could not have escaped the notice of Felix; certainly there was the intensity of a living conviction; certainly also a masterly division of the subject into heads of the deepest and largest interest. There are three heads.

i. Righteousness.

"He reasoned of righteousness"; perhaps it is more true to say he reasoned of *justice*. Doubtless righteousness has to our minds a larger sense, but St. Paul's expression on the whole implies more generally what we mean by justice.

Justice! It is one of those fundamental and primary intuitions, of the existence of which in the human mind we can give no rational account, except that it is there by the will of the Creator. It is simply a *fact* about man—a fact which gives the lie to materialistic philosophy—that he is conscious—certainly more or less conscious—of the power of the moral law and of the absolute obligation laid upon him to obey it. Now, justice is a fundamental principle in the moral law. It

has been defined to be "the constant and perpetual will to render to every man his right."

¶ Were I certain that one prayer and only one was to be granted to me, I would breathe it for the righteousness of the king, as the best means of reaching the interests of the world at large.[1]

But Justice has two aspects—Justice to Man and Justice to God.

1. *Justice to Man.* Let us look at some of the rights of man which are safeguarded by justice.

(1) First of all a man has a simple, a most elementary right to his own property. It is a mistake to suppose that the laws which govern and repress dishonesty are sufficient to ensure this elementary right as against those who disregard it. Here is a man who fancies that he should like to become the owner of something which he sees in a shop; perhaps he is moved by some passing whim, perhaps he wishes to make money out of it, perhaps he is driven to desperation by the pangs of hunger. He watches his opportunity, he appropriates the property, and finds himself convicted as a thief in the strong clutches of outraged law. But here is a man, well dressed, well supplied with the necessaries of life, moved by no unbearable pangs of hunger, who passes the same shop, is moved with the same desire of acquiring; and he, instead of stealing the article, goes in and buys it, but does not pay for it, knowing that he cannot pay for it then, and, perhaps, will have some difficulty in paying for it at all. In the sight of God he has virtually stolen those goods. And people who can ill afford it are deprived of their means of livelihood because he holds what is really their property.

¶ Now we must know that every excellence which is peculiar to a thing is lovable in that thing: as in a man to be well bearded, and in a woman to have her face entirely free from hair; or in a setter to have a good nose, and in a greyhound to be fast. And the more peculiar to a thing the excellence is, the more lovable it is. Hence, although every virtue is lovable in man, that is the most lovable in him which is the most human; and this virtue is justice, which is so lovable that, as Aristotle says in the *Ethics*, even her enemies love her, namely, thieves and robbers.[2]

[1] Abdullah bin Al Mubarak. [2] Dante, *Conv.* ii. 2 (trans. by Toynbee).

(2) And if man has a right to his property, much more has he a right to his life. It is strange how long the system of slavery lingered on with its systematic disregard of the most elementary rights of man. The slave as the living machine, without rights and without recognition, remained as one of the most gigantic monuments of the perversion of the idea of justice in the minds of those who, on the whole, loved justice and conceived themselves to be just. And we must remember that slavery still exists even in the most free countries. There are those who are enslaved by the advancing tide of luxury, which demands more and more ministers to its selfish enjoyment. Men and women crowded together without decent accommodation, forced to live close to those to whose luxuries they minister, men and women who toil day and night to make luxuries cheaper for those who insist on having more and more of them and paying less and less for their enjoyments, who are dressed in finery which represents the lives of men, and eat and drink the good things which have been purchased from barely remunerated labour. There is the slavery, again, which lives on the sin and degradation of others, one of the most appalling spectacles of modern civilization—men who profess to believe in Christ, or who at least live in a Christian land, openly despising and degrading souls for whom Christ died. No more fearful denunciation runs through the pages of the Bible than this: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

¶ In Birmingham one of the principal home industries is carding hooks and eyes. First the eyes are stitched on to the card. Then the hooks are linked into them, and finally stitched on to the card—384 hooks and 384 eyes have to be linked together and stitched on to a card for the munificent wage of one penny! And the worker has to provide her own needles and thread. With incessant work she may earn three shillings a week. What wonder that the children, even at the age of five years, are pressed into the work. One mother said: "You must either make the children work, or let them starve." A machine has been invented to do this work, but it is cheaper to employ low-paid human labour. In this industry, as in many others, the workers, who are often widows with young families, are able to live only through outdoor relief, or charitable gifts. They do not earn their living:

they are subsidized out of the rates, and their subsidy is really a grant in aid of wages, and so long as it is given, will keep down wages.[1]

(3) If a man has a right to his life, he has also a right to that which makes for happiness in life. How very little we think in our ordinary conversation of the value to our neighbour of his reputation, his character, or his position. The smallest caprice is looked upon as sufficient to justify the sarcastic cut, the cynical stab, the damaging suggestion which demolishes, to our satisfaction, our neighbour's too exuberant life.

When over the fair fame of friend or foe
The shadow of disgrace shall fall; instead
Of words of blame, or proof of thus and so,
Let something good be said.

Forget not that no fellow-being yet
May fall so low but love may lift his head:
Even the cheek of shame with tears is wet
If something good be said.

No generous heart may vainly turn aside
In ways of sympathy, no soul so dead
But may awaken strong and glorified,
If something good be said.

And so I charge you, by the thorny crown,
And by the cross on which the Saviour bled,
And by your own soul's hope of fair renown,
Let something good be said.

2. *Justice to God.* But if Justice is the virtue which bids us do that which right requires in our dealings with our fellow-men, Christianity, in the higher light which she has thrown upon these virtues, has felt even more that Justice is the virtue which bids us do what is right in our dealings with God. Every Christian, who thinks at all, feels that God has a right to the service and obedience of His creatures.

(1) God has a right to our ambition. Life itself is, or should be, carried out in obedience to vocation. Let us ask ourselves, Are we giving God His due in this respect? Are we doing what

[1] D. Watson, *Social Problems and the Church's Duty*, 118.

we ought for the Great Being who sent us into this world, not to eat and drink and be crammed with useful knowledge, and then push and struggle again, and perhaps die exultant because we had beaten a companion in the competitive examinations of life, and stood one step higher on its dizzy ladder? The idea is wrong in itself, it is not the profession but the vocation that we have to consider. If we have got God's call, and recognize our duty to Him, then it matters not where we work. The servant of God will glorify a cabin, a man who forgets God will degrade a palace. Let us cease the mere struggle to get on, and put God first. Am I glorifying God by my actions in honest, serious life, lived in His sight? Is this world the better because I am alive? Is society purer because I move in it? Is the place of business more worthy because I am there? Justice within my heart assigns the first place in life to God who made it.

O patient Christ! when long ago
  O'er old Judæa's rugged hills,
Thy willing feet went to and fro
  To find and comfort human ills—
Did once Thy tender, earnest eyes
Look down the solemn centuries,
And see the smallness of our lives?

Souls struggling for the victory,
  And martyrs, finding death was gain,
Souls turning from the Truth and Thee,
  And falling deep in sin and pain—
Great heights and depths were surely seen,
But oh! the dreary waste between—
Small lives, not base perhaps, but mean:

Their selfish efforts for the right,
  Or cowardice that keeps from sin,
Content to only see the height
  That nobler souls will toil to win!
Oh shame! to think Thine eyes should see
The souls contented just to be—
The lives too small to take in Thee.

Lord, let this thought awake our shame,
  That blessed shame that stings to life,
Rouse us to live for Thy dear name,
  Arm us with courage for the strife.

O Christ! be patient with us still;
Dear Christ: remember Calvary's hill,—
Our little lives with purpose fill![1]

(2) God has a right to our activity. How sad it is to count the number of those who sit idly looking on as the pushing, anxious stream grinds its way past them. There they sit, men and women, who seem to have lost energy for everything and to have missed their place in life. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." To be idle is to fail in one of those marks of resemblance which ought to distinguish man made in the image and likeness of God as the son of His Heavenly Father. To us all, whether early in the morning or at midday, or even at the eleventh hour, the voice of God speaks through our slumbering sense of Justice, and says: "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive."

If, as a flower doth spread and die,
Thou wouldst extend me to some good,
Before I were by frost's extremity
Nipt in the bud;

The sweetness and the praise were Thine,
But the extension and the room
Which in Thy garland I should fill were mine
At Thy great doom.

For as Thou dost impart Thy grace,
The greater shall our glory be.
The measure of our joys is in this place,
The stuff with Thee.

Let me not languish, then, and spend
A life as barren to Thy praise
As is the dust, to which that life doth tend.
But with delays.

All things are busy; only I
Neither bring honey with the bees,
Nor flowers to make that, nor the husbandry
To water these.

[1] Margaret Deland.

I am no link of Thy great chain,
But all my company is a weed.
Lord, place me in Thy concert; give one strain
To my poor reed.[1]

(3) God has a right to our homage and worship. This we offer to no one else; but Justice demands that we should offer it to Him. Do we realize that God has a right to our prayers and praises and our worship? It is not a question of our inclination, but of God's due, whether or not we say our prayers. It is not a matter of our own whims and fancy, but of God's honour, whether or not we "come before His Presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in Him with psalms." God has a right to one day in seven which He claims as His due. He has a right to at least a small portion of our time every day in the morning and in the evening. It is the very least we can give as a recognition of Him who gives us all, and who never yet received the gifts of His creatures without returning to them a bountiful interest in that which enriches life and happiness.

Bright shadows of true Rest! Some shoots of blisse;
Heaven once a week;
The next world's gladness prepossest in this;
A day to seek
Eternity in time; the steps by which
We climb above all ages; Lamps that light
Man through his heap of dark days; and the rich,
And full redemption of the whole week's flight.[2]

ii. Temperance.

1. *The largeness of the word.* The second topic on which St. Paul reasoned was temperance (R.V. margin "self-control"). The presence of Drusilla by the side of Felix was in itself a proof of how he had failed in this virtue, for the Greek word is specially applicable to continence from sensual pleasures. Our modern use of the word temperance falls far below the meaning of the word employed by St. Paul. That of which St. Paul reasoned with Felix was the larger virtue of self-restraint, of self-command,

[1] George Herbert. [2] Henry Vaughan.

generally. He taught him—still occupying the ground rather of nature and reason than of Revelation and the Gospel—that every man ought to be able to command himself; to say "No" to appetite when it passes its just limit; to bridle inclination; to coerce lust; to say to himself, This I will do, because it is right, and, This will I not do, because it is wrong. Temperance is the holding of the reins of conduct in the hand of the will, and the regulating of that will itself by the ordinances of reason and of God. The absence of this power, or the loss of it, is the cause of all the sins and of all the miseries which have made this world a scene of suffering and of desolation.

2. There are certain well-defined stages in the development of temperance. For let no one believe for one moment that a virtue like this grows up in us without effort, or is inherited with transmitted qualities.

(1) *Know Thyself.* To him who would possess the virtue of temperance there comes first of all this message to the soul, "Know Thyself." It is a great moral help to *know* ourselves, to know our history, to know our constituent elements, to know the ills to which we are exposed, and the Divine help which it is ours to welcome. It is being freely discussed now whether or not it is desirable to warn young people beforehand in a definite way of the dangers that must inevitably cross their path. It is a question beset with difficulties, and, in view of the priceless and irreparable value of innocence where it can be maintained, a question which can be entertained only as the lesser of two evils; but at the same time there is no doubt that a wise estimate of his own peculiar dangers, a prudent calculation of his force, and a just appreciation of the enemy's real strength would help a man.

(2) *Control Thyself.* A man once asked his spiritual adviser what was the meaning of "dying unto sin," and he was told in a symbolical manner that it was to behave like a dead man in the presence of that which moves or excites to sin. This state of deadness to desire is temperance, but it can only be attained through the constant application of self-control all through life. Does anything pass within the portals of our heart of which the will has no cognizance, or is powerless to resist? You remember

how the Apostle spoke of a self-control which brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ?

I do not ask for any crown
  But that which all may win,
Nor try to conquer any world
  Except the one within.
Be Thou my Guide until I find,
  Led by a tender hand,
The happy kingdom in myself,
  And dare to take command.

(3) *Deny Thyself.* "Know thyself," "Control thyself"—these are good and essential; but further, from her throne of excellence, Temperance cries, "Deny thyself." The will must not wait to be attacked, the will must not wait to show that it is master in days of turbulence, and in the fierce blasts of passion. Before the attack comes, while all is peaceful, when no tempter is in sight, while all is calm, the will must exercise herself in her discipline by self-denial. The way to resist indulgence in things unlawful is to accustom the powers and faculties to obedience in giving up even things lawful.

3. *Christian Temperance.* When, through the cross of Christ, we get the right attitude towards God, when our life fronts God, all is changed, and temperance becomes not a negative virtue, but a positive one. Then everything is beautiful, pure, every wish, every motive, every purpose, every imagination, every fancy clothed in a white robe.

¶ But as I sat scrawling these silly figures on brown paper, it began to dawn on me, to my great disgust, that I had left one chalk, and that a most exquisite and essential one, behind. I searched all my pockets, but I could not find any white chalk. Now, those who are acquainted with all the philosophy (nay, religion), which is typified in the art of drawing on brown paper, know that white is positive and essential. I cannot avoid remarking here upon a moral significance. One of the wise and awful truths which this brown-paper art reveals is this: that white is a colour. It is not a mere absence of colour; it is a shining and affirmative thing: as fierce as red, as definite as black. When (so to speak) your pencil grows red hot, it draws roses;

when it grows white hot, it draws stars. And one of the two or three defiant verities of the best religious morality—of real Christianity, for example—is exactly this same thing. Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming like Joan of Arc. In a word, God paints in many colours, but He never paints so gorgeously—I had almost said so gaudily—as when He paints in white.[1]

iii. The Judgment to Come.

Every coming of the Lord is associated with judgment; inevitably and necessarily the coming of Christ to any soul is the judgment of that soul; it was so when He was here on earth; souls were judged by His very coming. "This child," said Simeon to the astonished Mary in the temple, "is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against." And so it came to pass. By His mere presence He divided men and separated them. There was a "judging" wherever Christ appeared. Men's characters stood revealed. The bias of the soul declared itself. Men classified themselves; tried by the touchstone of His character, of their own accord, they took their stand, some on the right and others on the left. "God sent not his Son into the world," says John, "to judge the world," and yet the actual result of His coming was a judgment. "This is the judgment," he goes on to say, just a sentence or two further down, "that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil." He judged the world by His presence in it. The essential goodness of Peter and John and James and Zacchæus, and the essential evil of the chief priests and scribes, stood disclosed by contact with Jesus. And every coming of the Lord involves judgment still. His coming to us as individuals in the appeals and strivings of His Spirit implies a judging. The good heart and the evil heart stand revealed by the answer given to His pleadings and calls. Suppose that at this moment Jesus presents Himself to us; and suppose we bow Him out of our heart and life; suppose we say to Him in effect, "We will not have Thee to reign over us." The judgment has taken place! We have declared ourselves amongst the goats upon the left hand.

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles*.

And His coming to a nation in the great crises of its history implies and involves a judging. As Lowell says—

> Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
> offering each the bloom or blight,
> Parts the goats upon the left hand,
> and the sheep upon the right,
> And the choice goes by for ever
> 'twixt that darkness and that light.

But in the Creed we have the statement that Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father will come "to judge the quick and the dead."

1. Let us first look at *the Certainty of this Judgment.*

(1) What does Scripture say? "And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come"—no, that is not precisely what Luke wrote. Read the verse again in the Revised Version: "Paul reasoned of . . . *the* judgement to come." It was no misty idea of a coming judgment that floated dimly through the speaker's mind; he thought of "that day" when the books would be opened and God should judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. And to this bear all the Scriptures witness. Let us turn to the Old Testament and read those many anticipations of the "day of the Lord" to be found so often in the writings of the prophets. Then let us open the New Testament, and immediately the truth rises before us in sharpest and most unmistakable distinctness. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory"—they are His own words—"and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all the nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." And if from the words of Jesus we turn to the records of the early Christian Church, to the Acts of the Apostles and the various Epistles that follow, the result is the same. It would be impossible, says Dr. Denney, to overestimate the power of this final judgment as a motive in the primitive Church. When Peter went to expound the Gospel for the first time to a Roman centurion, this was how he summed up the sacred commission given to him and the other disciples: "He charged us to preach

unto the people and to testify that this is he which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." When Paul proclaimed the Gospel in Athens an essential part of his message was this: "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

(2) But it may be doubted whether the expectation of a judgment is more a point of natural or of revealed religion. Certainly, if revelation declares, conscience ratifies. The sense of accountability is one of those ultimate facts of human nature, inconceivable upon the modern molecular hypothesis, which any teacher who professed to deal remedially, or even philosophically, with that nature—Socrates as well as Christ—could not but recognize. And so it is stamped deep and legible on every page of the Gospel. We shall be judged according as our works have been; and the conscience, whatever its testimony may be worth, echoes, "We shall be so judged." Our Master may seem to have gone for a while into a far country, but "He will return," He says, "and reckon with His servants."

2. If the Final Judgment is a certainty, *its character* becomes most vital to us. Amid the thousand false, low standards upon the commonest matters of morality accepted and acted upon by the young, the pleasure-seeking, the fashionable, the money-getting, the ambitious, it is well to try to accustom the mind to set before itself clearly and distinctly the principles that will govern—that we feel must govern—"the righteous judgment of God"; well to anticipate, to make ourselves seem to hear that terrible sentence which we know will be passed against us if we are deliberately leading impure, selfish, false, dishonest lives—if we are resisting God's call to repentance and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace.

(1) This Judgment will often mean the reversal of human judgment. A Day of Judgment means that once at least we shall be judged perfectly, that all things will be seen as they really are. Here and now we hide ourselves from one another; often we hide ourselves from ourselves; as Morley truly says, "People have understandings with themselves here." But then all disguises

will drop off, the heart's counsels will be made manifest, the life's long-kept secrets revealed.

¶ In one of Dean Church's letters, a letter written not long before his death, there is a sublime figure, not unworthy, as Morley says, of the Dante which its author so much loved and so well understood: "I often have a kind of waking dream," he wrote: "up one road, the image of a man decked and adorned as if for a triumph, carried up by rejoicing and exulting friends, who praise his goodness and achievements; and on the other road, turned back to back to it, there is the very man himself, in sordid and squalid apparel, surrounded not by friends, but by ministers of justice, and going on, while his friends are exulting, to his certain and perhaps awful judgment.[1]

(2) That Judgment which will mean the reversal of many of our judgments will be itself final and irreversible. What may happen between death and the judgment we know not. That which theologians call the intermediate state lies for the most part in shadow, and, save for a few fitful and uncertain gleams, the New Testament itself leaves the darkness unbroken. But all Scripture agrees in representing the judgment of the great day as final. Of any change, of any revision beyond that, it gives no hint, it holds out no hope. Indeed, may we not almost say that in the nature of things it must be final, for it is the judgment of perfect wisdom and perfect love?

¶ It is impossible to dogmatize. The "larger hope," as people term it, is only a "hope" at the best. The thing about which Scripture leaves us in no shadow of doubt is the immense, critical, and decisive influence of this life. Upon the life we live momentous and eternal issues hang. We do not know what may happen in the endless ages of eternity; what we *do* know is that it is the gentle Christ who tells us that the broad way leads to destruction; that sin entails the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched; that some go to eternal punishment and some to eternal life. "You seem, sir," said Mrs. Adams to Dr. Johnson, in one of his despondent hours, when the fear of death and judgment lay heavy upon him, "to forget the merits of our Redeemer." "Madam," replied Johnson, with his usual blunt honesty, "I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer, but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left."

[1] G. Jackson.

¶ I remember as a child seeing my mother examine a piece of cloth or dress fabric in the evening under the gaslight, and then she would say, "Wait until the morning till we see how it looks by daylight." Let us take heed we are not deceived by how things look in the glare and glitter of the lamps of time; let us resolve to see them in the clear steady radiance of eternity.[1]

3. Let us thank God that He has made the Judgment to come a matter of revelation.

¶ One who has since passed within the veil often said to me, "I thank God that there is a judgment to come." At the time I could hardly say Amen! Judgment scarcely seemed to me a theme for a doxology; yet he was right—it *is* a thing to thank God for! It nerves all virtuous endeavour, it is the pulse of patience, the soul of perseverance, the safeguard against the bitterness of despair—this appeal to a higher tribunal. And from the earliest ages the Church of Christ has felt that she could not only solemnly say, but reverently and gratefully sing it too—

We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge,
We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants
Whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy Precious Blood![2]

When with these eyes, closed now by Thee,
But then restored,
The great and white throne I shall see
Of my dread Lord;
And lowly kneeling, for the most
Stiff then must kneel,
Shall look on Him, at whose high cost
Unseen, such joys I feel.

Whatever arguments or skill
Wise heads shall use,
Tears only and my blushes still
I will produce.
And should those speechless beggars fail,
Which oft have won,
Then taught by Thee I will prevail,
And say, Thy will be done![3]

[1] G. Jackson. [2] J. M. Gibbon. [3] Henry Vaughan.

III.

The Effect of the Sermon.

i. Felix was terrified.

1. Paul knew that there was in every man something that would respond to the manifestation of the truth. He knew that he had a message for Felix—even God's message; and presently there was that in the bearing of the man whom he addressed which abundantly justified his confidence. "Felix was terrified." He may have shared, he probably did share, in the widespread scepticism or unbelief of the educated heathen of the age. He had overlived all faith in the things which his own religion taught him, of the rewards laid up for the good, of the punishments reserved for the wicked. Tartarus and Elysium, Minos and Rhadamanthus with their seats of judgment, the wheel of Ixion, the stone of Sisyphus, the whips of the Furies, all these, no doubt, were poets' fictions, old wives' tales, dotards' dreams for him. Dismissing these, he may have long since dismissed with them the truth which was behind them all, that kernel of truth whereof these were but the husk and outer covering. But now at Paul's words, that truth, so old and yet so new, revived in him again—just as by some chemical applications the writings on parchment, long since apparently effaced by age, may start into life again. Besides the voice of the Apostle, there was another voice in his own heart, deep calling unto deep, which told him that this was true, which compelled him to set his own seal to the Apostle's words; and "Felix was terrified."

2. The awakened conscience is just like the sense of pain in the physical world, it has got a work to do, and a mission to perform. It is meant to warn us off dangerous ground. Thank God for pain! It keeps off death many a time. Felix was on the high road to utter hardness and blindness of heart, but he had not arrived at that condition yet. For this is the strange characteristic of sin, when carried to the extent of producing spiritual blindness and hardness of heart, that those solemn glimpses of an unseen world, those feelings of horror at the

thought of the loss of God's favour, become at length like the dreams of infancy, and are regarded as little; but Felix "was terrified."

3. But impulse is not to be a resting-place. Emotion is not the goal. Is that altogether a needless warning? It is possible to cultivate a spurious emotionalism, a luxury of emotions, which may come to be regarded as the marrow and essence of true religion. True religion is not merely the enjoyment of certain feelings; it is the translation of them. There is a wide difference between good impulse and good life, and the work of true religion is to translate the one into the other. We have to take the impulse, given us by God, and translate it first into resolution and then into action. That is religion, to take divine impulse, and, by the process of living, translate it into finished and eternal achievement.

¶ Dr. Wayland Hoyt tells the story of a captain whom he met in the pilot-house of a Missouri River steamboat, and who asked his judgment concerning his conduct. He said that when he was a young man, and was first married, his wife was a Christian, and to please her he began to go to church; he never could hear singing and not be moved; the songs they sang in the church touched him strongly. They brought up forgotten memories and unloosed the springs of feeling; he was overcome. Because he wept, they thought he had become a Christian. His wife, the minister, and many friends pressed him to join the church. "But," said the captain, "I could not. I told them I had simply been stirred by songs as I always am. I knew I had not given up my evil ways."

ii. Felix put off Decision.

1. "Felix answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." Felix broke off the audience, saying that when he found another opportunity he would summon Paul again for a public audience. But Paul remained in Cæsarea two full years waiting for the second hearing. Felix did indeed send for Paul again—but we do not read that he felt any emotion again. He communed with him often. But why? Was it to deepen his impression? Was it that he might obtain more perfect knowledge of the way of Christ? Was it that he might better learn how to flee from

that wrath of God at which he shuddered? The sacred historian shall tell us *why* he sent for Paul, and communed with him often. "He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him." All that was meanest, all that was basest, all that was most unrighteous in the man had revived again, and in all its old strength and malignity.

¶ If we take a bit of phosphorus and put it upon a slip of wood, and ignite the phosphorus, bright as the blaze is, there drops from it a white ash that coats the wood, and makes it almost incombustible. And so when the flaming conviction, laid upon our hearts, has burnt itself out, it has coated the heart, and it will be very difficult to kindle the light there again.[1]

¶ The great bell of Moscow, the largest bell in the world, was cast more than two hundred years ago, and has never been raised, not because it is too heavy, but because it is cracked. All was going well at the foundry, when a fire broke out in Moscow. Streams of water were dashed in upon the houses and factories, and a tiny little stream found its way into the bell-metal at the very moment when it was rushing in a state of fusion into the colossal bell-mould, and so the big bell came out cracked, and all its capacity of music was destroyed. The historic incident presented itself as a symbol of our thought. Here is a divinely-given impulse, like soft and molten metal, just flowing into the mould of our first thought, and hardening into noble and steadfast decision. And an insidious doubt or compromise is allowed to have its way, and trickle in at the vital moment when impulse is just shaping into the image of the divine likeness, and all is spoilt, and the bell of heavenly impulse does not ring out the music of a redeemed and sanctified life. It is this intrusion of the compromise that works such destruction in our spiritual life. Life would abound in heavenly bell-music if we took every divine impulse and offered it the mould of a ready and willing decision. "Teach me to do Thy will."[2]

Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

2. What is a convenient season? It is a season when you can do a thing just as easily as not. When a friend asks you to do something, if convenient, you answer: "Oh yes; it is entirely convenient. No trouble at all." That is what is meant by a convenient season. Well, does a convenient season ever come to

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] J. H. Jowett.

repent? It never does. A man has to put himself to great inconvenience when he makes the change.

The Apostle spake of judgment just,
And certain unto men as death;
Prince Felix felt as if the thrust
Of deadly arrows stayed his breath:
"I'll hear thee at convenient time,"
He said, his terror to dissemble;
But when can guilt conveniently
Invite the truth that makes it tremble?[1]

3. "*Go thy way*," said Felix. If only we could be sure that a voice was God's, we would obey it swiftly and gladly; but the pain of life is that its silences are so long, and so seldom broken by a voice which we can with confidence welcome as divine. But is that voice so very rare? or is it not rather that we have not schooled ourselves to understand the language in which it speaks? For it sometimes speaks as a rising terror in the heart. "Go away," cries Felix, in a sudden access of terror. It is to Paul that he is speaking, but what are those awful words but a tragic farewell to God—the God who was pleading with him through the mighty presence of Paul?

¶ The peasants of southern Russia say that an old woman was at work in her house when the Wise Men of the East, led by the star, passed on their way to go and seek the infant Saviour. "Come with us," they said. "We are going to find the Christ so long looked for by men." "Not now," she replied. "I am not ready to go now; but by and by I will follow on and find Him with you." But when her work was done the Wise Men had gone, and the star in the heavens which went before them had disappeared.[2]

¶ There are two sworn enemies of my soul. Their names are Yesterday and To-morrow. Yesterday slays his thousands. What he seeks to do is to plunge me down into darkness and despair. "You have had your chances," he says, "such golden chances, and you have trampled them all under foot. There will be no more priceless opportunities for you." Ay, but To-morrow slays his tens of thousands. He has recourse to just the opposite expedients from those of Yesterday. Brave vows and valiant promises that will never be fulfilled; good resolutions that may lull my conscience into sleep,—these are his deadly weapons.

[1] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 143. [2] L. A. Banks.

When I have a convenient season, he bids me say to the Saviour and the Spirit of God, I will send for Thee. And how pitifully often the convenient season never dawns.[1]

4. "Go thy way." Let us think what reasons influence us to make this reply.

(1) First, there is *the instinctive, natural wish to get rid of a disagreeable subject,*—much as a man, without knowing what he is doing, twitches his hand away from the surgeon's lancet. So many of us do not like these thoughts of the old Book about "righteousness and temperance and the judgement to come," and make a natural effort to get our minds away from the contemplation of the subject because it is painful and unpleasant. But would it be a wise thing for a man, if he began to suspect that he was insolvent, to refuse to look into his books or to take stock, and let things drift, till there was not a halfpenny in the pound for anybody? What would his creditors call him? And is it not the part of a wise man, if he begins to see that something is wrong, to get to the bottom of it, and as quickly as possible to set it right? What do we call people who, suspecting that there may be a great hole in the bottom of the ship, never man the pumps or do any caulking, but say, "Oh! she will very likely keep afloat until we get into harbour"? Would it not be a wiser thing, if, because the subject is disagreeable, we should force ourselves to think about it until it became agreeable?

(2) Some of us say to the messenger of God's love: "Go thy way for this time," because *we do not like to give up something that we know is inconsistent* with His love and service. Felix would not part with Drusilla, nor disgorge the ill-gotten gain of his province. Felix therefore was obliged to put away from him the thoughts that looked in that direction. Felix was ambitious. He was unpopular with the Jews, but this was in his favour at Rome. He might become emperor. Who could tell? To turn Christian would ruin his prospects. His duty was clear enough, but just now it stood in his way of personal elevation.

(3) Some of us fall into this habit of putting off the decision for Christ, simply by *letting the impressions made on our hearts and consciences be crowded out of them* by cares and enjoyments and pleasures and duties of this world. And if some stray seed here

[1] A. Smellie.

and there remains and begins to sprout, the ill weeds which grow apace, spring up with ranker stems and choke it. We did not intend it to go, we simply opened the door to the flocking in of the whole crowd of the world's cares and occupations, and away went the shy solitary thought which, if it had been cared for and tended, might have led us at last to the Cross of Jesus Christ.

(4) But the fourth reason brings the most grist to the Devil's mill. It is *the inherent tendency in men to procrastinate and to compromise.* Remember the foolish virgins who found it too late to enter in; the guests called to the feast, who chose rather to look after their worldly interest, and thus were shut out from the kingdom of God; the people whom Christ called, and who wanted first to attend to their friends and business, and with whom Christ would allow no delay. Can we help seeing that what makes people put off in worldly business and put off in religion is exactly the same thing, namely, a dislike to what has to be done, and that the dislike is not likely to become less by this waiting for a more convenient season?

Visions and Obedience.

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Visions and Obedience.

Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.—Acts xxvi. 19.

1. To the critic of the Christian religion there has always been one insuperable difficulty. That difficulty is St. Paul. Wherever the critic goes, and however successful he may find or fancy himself elsewhere in explaining and analysing, that strange, heroic figure stands before him on every path. How came St. Paul to be converted? How came this learned and dogmatic Pharisee to be the most devoted champion of a despised and rejected Christ? No adequate answer has ever been found to those questions, save the answer of St. Paul himself: that in one way or another he had seen a "heavenly vision," and had not been "disobedient" to the call.

2. The scene suggested by the text is worth recalling. It was about the year A.D. 60, and Paul lay a prisoner in the Prætorium of Cæsarea. Two years he had been there, suffering on the most vexatious and frivolous of charges. Felix had little doubt of his innocence; and his conscience had been roused to painful activity by the Apostle's arguments on righteousness, on the duty of self-restraint, and on the certainty of coming judgment. But a habit of self-seeking had long asserted its sway over conscience, and, to curry favour with the Jewish fanatics, Felix had gone out of office, leaving Paul bound.

Festus had come. Paul had naturally declined his unfair proposal to be tried at Jerusalem, and had appealed to Rome. Festus may have been annoyed at such rejection, but he was a man of sufficient capacity to recognize the high intellectual gifts and commanding character of the prisoner. Agrippa and his sister Bernice had come to pay court to him, and in conversation Festus mentioned the case of St. Paul. It excited the interest of Agrippa,

who expressed a desire himself to hear the prisoner plead. It was an opportunity for Festus—an opportunity for hearing the opinion of a Jew of distinction upon a question so perplexing to a Roman official as the law of heresy; an opportunity, also, for paying a compliment to his distinguished friends, and using Paul to "make a Roman holiday."

The audience took place in the Prætorian Palace. Very striking the scene must have been. In the chair of state, and in the splendid hall, sat Festus, wearing the robes of office and representing the majesty of Rome. The hall was filled with soldiers; the procurator was attended by the officers of his guard and of the legions in their military accoutrements, and by the representatives of civic authority in their official robes. Then came the Jewish sovereign and his sister with the fullest pageantry of State. They were young, and Bernice was beautiful with the personal beauty which seemed to belong to the race of the Herods, in striking contrast to their moral depravity. Nothing that could make the occasion splendid and impressive was wanting. When all was ready the prisoner was called.

Paul appeared manacled and was conducted between guards to the judgment-seat, and the hearing began. The prisoner spoke of his earlier life and convictions; of his unflinching opposition to the nascent Christian sect; of his treatment of Stephen; then of the light which flashed upon him, convincing him of his mistake and showing him the truth; and then of his after action. "Whereupon," he said, as he related the turning-point in his career—"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

I.

Visions.

i. The Visions and Ideals of Life.

1. "I was not disobedient," he says, "unto the heavenly vision." St. Paul is speaking of an experience which has come, in some form or other, to all great and good men—the dream, the vision, the sudden illuminating conviction of a Divine strength and a Divine consolation—the sense of a finger pointing and of a voice calling upward to a higher life, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Those moments of light and inspiration will be found,

sometimes in strange shapes, in the life of every great prophet or reformer. All the leading men of Old Testament history—Jacob, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel—had some experience similar to St. Paul's: Jacob when he wrestled at Peniel with that mysterious Presence, and would not let Him go until He had blessed him with a new name, a new and serious thought of life and its deep meaning; Elijah when, from the darkness of his lonely cave amid the mountains, he heard a still, small voice, and was comforted; Isaiah when he saw the Lord sitting enthroned in His temple, and felt the angel lay upon his lips the live coal taken from the burning altar; Ezekiel when, as he sat captive by the river of Chebar, the heavens were opened upon him, and he saw visions of God—the four Cherubim coming out of the whirlwind, and the glory of the sapphire throne.

2. Now, the revelation that is made to the understanding and the heart, to the spirit and the will, is the same whether it be made, as it was to Paul, through a heavenly vision; or, as it was to the other Apostles, through the facts of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, which their senses certified to them; or, as it is to us, by the record of the same facts, permanently enshrined in Scripture. Paul's sight of Christ was for a moment; we can see Him as often and as long as we will, by turning to the pages of Scripture. Paul's sight of Christ was accompanied with but a partial apprehension of the great and far-reaching truths which he was to learn and to teach, as embodied in the Lord whom he saw. To see Him was the work of a moment, to "know Him" was the effort of a lifetime. We have the abiding results of the lifelong process lying ready to our hands in Paul's own letters. And we have not only the permanent record of Christ in the Gospels instead of the transient vision in the heavens, and the unfolding of the meaning and bearings of the historical facts in the authoritative teaching of the Epistles; but we have also, in the history of the Church founded on these, in the manifest workings of a Divine power for and through the company of believers (as well as in the correspondence between the facts and doctrines of Christianity and the wants of humanity), a vision disclosed and authenticated as heavenly, more developed, fuller of meaning and more blessed to the eyes which see it than was

poured upon the persecutor as he reeled from his horse on the way to the great city.

3. Besides "outward and ordinary means," there are also golden moments of inspiration and encouragement; and such moments we all can and ought to watch for. Dull indeed, or very depraved, is the life that never knows them. Even the most apparently commonplace career is often lightened by them, unknown to men; and many are the channels through which God sends them into the twilight in which we move. Sometimes they come through the conversation of a friend, sometimes through the appeal of a noble life; now it is the voice of conscience that brings them, now it is the pathos or terror of some passing event; or, again, we receive them from a poet's art, or from a wandering melody, or even from a purple blossom of the woods. There is no mysticism, no idle dreaming here: men have been strangely guided by such things ere now; they are strangely guided by them to-day. Doubtless we are the creatures of a mood: but then it is the higher moods that we have to seek, and these are some of the ways in which we find them.

¶ A short time ago, at a Convention in which I had to take some part, a working man rose to give a testimony. He told us that he was the son of a Dorset labourer, that twenty years ago he came to Lancashire to work in the mill, that he was converted in the church where we met, and that ever since he had been a worker in the church. But last year he was stricken with an illness, and his spiritual joy left him. The depression was almost unbearable. One morning he started out for the moors. It was a beautiful May day, and the air was filled with the singing of the birds, and the heather was lit up with sunshine. The impulse to pray came upon him, and for an hour—to use his own words—"for an hour upon my knees I held a conversation. Suddenly I was wonderfully conscious of the Divine Presence. Christ spoke to me. He showed me the print of the nails and the wounded side, and my heart exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God.'" Then said he, "Account for it as you may, but there streamed in upon me a heavenly joy which I had never known before, and which has never left me. It fills me with song. It transfigures my work. It gives me power." Such was his testimony.[1]

4. Of course we must not look for heavenly visions of a miraculous kind. Our unimportance in the history of the world

[1] W. Redfern.

would not warrant us in indulging in any such vain anticipations. But in due measure and in proportion to that which we are, those very dreams of youth which inspire us to think and then to plan and to work, are God's way of arousing us to fill worthily that place in life towards which He is calling us; and we should in that sense accept and obey "the heavenly vision" that is granted to us. Such day-dreams are often enough disfigured and degraded by elements of mere selfish and earthly ambition; but it is the province of religion to purge our ideals, while the ideal itself would perhaps be too little attractive if at the first it revealed itself to us in that austere form which on closer acquaintance we find that it really possesses.

¶ Nobody is without ideals of heroism, of self-devotion, or disinterestedness. They are very common in books; they are not uncommon in life. Everybody knows some men and women whose hearts are touched with a profound pity for the infinite sorrows of humanity, whose lives are more or less governed by that pity; who count it a better thing (when opportunity offers) to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction than to spend a merry evening among their own. Everybody sees what a beneficent thing a woman's life may be when it is wholly given up to the service of humanity and of God. You may be as keenly alive to the errors and mischiefs of Romanism as any one; but when you take note of one of those little Sisters of the Poor and the kind of life they lead, you perceive at once that they have seen a very heavenly Vision and are entirely obedient to it. Their active devotion to the needs of others belongs not in any sense to Romanism; it belongs to Christianity pure and simple. If one should compare their life with the life of an ordinary woman of fashion in this city, one sees that it possesses unspeakably more of nobility, more of happiness, more of reward, even in this world. No one can miss that.[1]

> I fear not Thy withdrawal; more I fear,
> Seeing, to know Thee not—hoodwinked with dreams
> Of signs and wonders—while, unnoticed, Thou,
> Walking Thy garden still, commun'st with men,
> Missed in the commonplace of Miracle![2]

5. But it is not by the gift of ideals only that God's hand is found in our lives. It is by their constant surrender and the acceptance of higher ideals in their place. There was a vision

[1] R. Winterbotham. [2] Dora Farncomb, *The Vision of His Face*, 4.

before the eye of Saul of Tarsus, of this earth, and, in part, of his own creating. It took shape in a great measure out of the circumstances of his birth; it was such a vision as would naturally be seen by one who was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews." Moreover, the vision took the colour of "that strictest sect of the Jews' religion" to which he who saw it belonged. It was the vision of a justification wrought out for the man by the man himself, a salvation of his own obtaining; the dream of a life by which he would become "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Perhaps, too, there rose before the mind of Saul a vision of fame and renown. His Epistles point him out as a man of profound intellectual power; his life's story declares him a man of marvellous energy, daring, persistency. He had attached himself to the most illustrious rabbi of his day, one of the most celebrated in the records of Judaism. Might not this young Pharisee hope to succeed to some measure of the fame and influence of his master Gamaliel, and to be written on the same roll of merit with those whom his nation and generation delighted to honour—Simon the Just, Abtalyon, and the great Hillel? Circumstances favoured such ambition; he was "a young man," but apparently he was already wielding influence in the ecclesiastic councils of his people—giving his vote, and entrusted with inquisitorial powers. Probably if one part of this self-made earthly vision glowed with brighter hues, it was the destruction of the Nazarene heresy: against this, to use his own words, he was "exceeding mad." But there rose before him another vision; no longer a self-made and earthly, but, as he terms it, "a heavenly vision." It showed him the men and women, whom he would hale to prison, would condemn to suffering or death, or compel to blaspheme: but he—Saul of Tarsus—was of that martyr-throng. It showed him that Jesus, whom they acknowledged as the Messiah and the Son of God as persecuted by Saul, and demanding, "Why persecutest thou me?"

Many the fields we reap,
And the secrets we divine;
We sink where the dim pearls sleep,
And soar where the planets shine,
While the race, with its restless heart, doth creep
Toward the far, grey limit-line.

The treasures we've won are nought,
The treasures to win are all;
The thing that the seeker sought
Is held—and then let fall;
For the prize well-grasped is not worth a thought
When the ungrasped gives a call.

The best is but the best
While it lies beyond the hand;
The subtle joy of the quest
Is the hope by the questing fanned;
And no man loveth the land possessed
As he loveth the promised land.

Thus doth the life indeed
Call to the life that seems;
Ever a larger creed
Stands writ in the land of dreams,
And read when the gloom of a wordless need
Is pierced by a far world's gleams.

Thus it hath ever been,
And thus shall it ever be—
This spell of the "things not seen"
Cast over the things we see—
Till the gain and the praise of the days look mean
In the dream of eternity.[1]

¶ It has been pointed out by the great Brighton preacher, Frederick Robertson, that it is largely by illusions that God in His mercy leads us on; as we find to have been the case in the story of His chosen people. And this same thought is also well illustrated in two verses (one of them autobiographical) written by Cardinal Newman about the year 1836—

Did we but see,
When life first open'd, how our journey lay
Between its earliest and its closing day,
Or view ourselves, as we one time shall be,
Who strive for the high prize, such sight would break
The youthful spirit, though bold for Jesus' sake.

[1] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 12.

But Thou, dear Lord!
Whilst I traced out bright scenes which were to come,
Isaac's pure blessings, and a verdant home,
Didst spare me, and withhold Thy fearful word;
Wiling me, year by year, till I am found
A pilgrim pale, with Paul's sad girdle bound.

¶ The dreams of boyhood are mostly dreams of realized ambition; and such dreams need, it is true, purification by the motives of religion; yet they are not to be despised; for ambitions are often noble in themselves, and the youth who in a kind of vision sees himself as a man living and acting as he would wish to live and act is really helped towards the realization of his ideal by the thrill of mingled hope and triumph that affects his whole frame when he pictures to himself the moment when he will have reached that climax of his hopes, which it is wholly honourable in him to desire to reach. Without some such "heavenly vision"—for these things are from God, or are at any rate permitted by Him—many a man who has served God and his country well would have frittered away his energies in useless or in ignoble pursuits, and, unmanned by depression, would never have achieved anything at all.[1]

I go down from the hills half in gladness, and half with a pain I depart,
Where the Mother with gentlest breathing made music on lip and in heart;
For I know that my childhood is over: a call comes out of the vast,
And the love that I had in the old time like beauty in twilight is past.

I am fired by a Danaan whisper of battles afar in the world,
And my thought is no longer of peace, for the banners in dream are unfurled,
And I pass from the council of stars and of hills to a life that is new:
And I bid to you stars and you mountains a tremulous long adieu.

I will come once again as a master, who played here as child in my dawn,
I will enter the heart of the hills where the gods of the old world are gone.

[1] A. W. Hutton.

And will war like the bright Hound of Ulla with princes of earth and of sky.
For my dream is to conquer the heavens and battle for kingship on high.[1]

ii. The Source of our Visions.

1. Great ideals are the glory of man. No other creatures here can have them; only men may receive an inspiration that shall raise them above themselves. This being so, whence comes the ideal? It is not of man himself, obviously, but of God. So Moses could have no inspiring ideal of what Israel might be, and should be one day, an ideal that should possess his imagination, and fill his soul with a holy gleam of hope, abiding with him day and night, and making him strong to endure and to do, unless *the pattern* had been shown to him *in the mount.* But there God had unveiled to him all the possibilities of that people of Israel, and thenceforth Moses set himself, by God's help, to make the vision real. In like manner, Paul could not have portrayed for himself the glowing picture of a regenerate Roman world, all bowing in adoration to the Crucified, had not the glory, beyond the brightness of the sun, shone from the heavens, blinding, for a while, the natural vision, but photographing itself indelibly on the soul; so that thenceforth only "one thing" could he do—traverse city and country, land and sea, toil-tired but untiringly, and endure infamy and death, if only he might reduce vision to fact, and make his high imaginations actual realities. So all man's true ideals, of personal life and of service for man's sake, are of God.

2. Our ideals may come to us mediately. They shine before us in the lives of noble men, they burn with quenchless fire in the poems of the ages, they lift their fair beauty before our view in the manifold Scriptures of God, and they show themselves as at once ideal and real in the glory of the Only Begotten, "full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). But, mediately as these ideals may thus be presented to us, they must take immediate hold of our imagination, and kindle the fervours of our own soul—even as though we ourselves were in the mount alone with God, or were

[1] "A. E.," *The Divine Vision*, 24.

struck by the sudden glory from the skies. Otherwise, their Divine purpose will be unfulfilled, and our life largely unblessed.

¶ The heavenly vision to which St. Paul was obedient was the vision of the Divine Son of God, who in human form appeared to him on the road to Damascus. And the heavenly vision to which we are called upon to be obedient is ever, the vision of Christ manifesting to us Divine excellences which He would have abiding in our hearts and shown forth in our lives. All through life this vision presents itself to us in varying ways, and in aspects varying according to our changing needs. All through life we as Christians are ready to acknowledge that our aim should be to become Christlike, to live a Christlike life. The word Christlike cannot with any efficacy present itself to our thoughts unless to our inner sight there presents itself at the same time the image of Christ, bearing just that aspect of divineness which we at the time have the greatest need of attaining to the possession of. That which we gaze upon with our inward eyes is a heavenly vision, to which we are called upon to render obedience—to which like the Apostle Paul we must not be disobedient.

II.

Obedience.

What was the secret of St. Paul's great and strenuous life, to which more than to any other our Western world owes the fact that it is Christian? Whence did this comparatively independent labourer in the Master's vineyard obtain the force that enabled him to accomplish such things? How was it that he "laboured more abundantly" than the rest? They had been privileged, in a way that he was not, to hold three years' close companionship with their Lord. To St. Paul the Master appeared, more than once, it would seem, but as a kind of afterthought, "as to one born out of due time"; but then he "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Obedience to the heavenly vision—that was the secret of it all. And so, if we wish to express in one simple phrase the secret of this great man, whose courage and genius as well as his faith and love raise him so high above the level even of the greatest of men, we cannot do better than recall the words spoken humbly but firmly in the presence of an unbelieving king: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." That is the explanation of it all.

1. There must be both the vision and the obedience, and they must be in that order. St. Paul had no magic secret that kept labour sweet to him; he had only vision and obedience. But he had them in that order—vision first, and obedience following from it. It is not mere action that is the secret of a healthy life, but action performed in loyalty to something we have seen. All the effective activities of men around us are just processes for turning thought into action—one's own thought, or the thought of others. In every art and craft and enthusiasm the supreme secret of mastery is to know what you are doing. Architecture is simply thought which has expressed itself in stone, or else it is sheer abomination. True healing comes not from routine prescription, but finds its sources deep among the springs of the physician's heart and imagination and experience. Social reform is either the most useless dilettantism, or it is the creation of a new earth upon the lines of a pattern already clearly seen. So it is with all good work. It may be of many various kinds and there may be very many different ways of doing it, but this is characteristic of them all, that a man is carrying out into deed what he has seen in his mind. Vision ever goes before action, and true action is loyalty to vision.

¶ How full the Bible is of visions that lead to tasks! Abraham must see the vision of the great nation which was to spring from him, "numerous as the sand upon the sea-shore," ere he can leave his native land and become a pilgrim and a sojourner on earth. Moses must see the burning bush on the slopes of Midian before he has the strength to attack Pharaoh's hard heart and re-awaken the passion for freedom in his fellow-countrymen's drooping souls; and he must be taken to see the "pattern in the mount" ere he can formulate the practical code of government for them afterwards. Isaiah must see the Lord "high and lifted up" in the temple before his lips are touched with fire, and the message of grace and judgment can be uttered by him to the world. All the galaxy of heroes whose story is told us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews were men who were sustained all through their trials and sufferings by a vision, a promise, a dream, that ever fled before them, but which sufficed to keep up their faith and courage under unimaginable hardship and suffering. And we are told of Jesus Himself that He, too, was upheld and strengthened for His tasks by a dream—"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame."[1]

[1] E. Griffith-Jones.

(1) *The Vision comes first.* There goes out from every life upon those around it, a constant and subtle influence which is determined almost wholly by the inner life of vision—the life of imagination and thought. Thoreau has wisely said: "If ever I *did* a man good . . . it was something exceptional and insignificant compared with the good or evil I am constantly doing by being what I am." A man's atmosphere and spirit are always more powerful influences than his deeds and words. Thus it is not surprising that the matter on which Christianity lays most stress is vision. The thoughts and imaginations of the heart; a taste for fine and clean things, and an instinctive shrinking from their opposites; above all, a clear conception of Jesus Christ and a definitely accepted relation between the soul and Him—these are the Christian fundamentals. Christianity has vindicated the rights of the imagination on its own account, apart from its outward expression; and insisted that a man may lose his honour and respectability there, without going farther afield. Christ amazed His contemporaries by the value He set upon the life of vision: He shifted the centre of attention from outward respectability to inward seeing and light.

¶ The most impracticable man is he who ignores the soul and its knowledges as the eventual basis of power. The prophets, the inventors, the great painters, sculptors, musicians, architects, philosophers, statesmen, philanthropists—all are interpreters of the power and reality of the idea. Columbus, Leverrier, Harvey, Newton, Hamilton thought it and then showed it. Vision is the vital thing in Plato, Dante, Bunyan, Goethe, Tennyson. This it is that "pries far into distant worlds." High patriotism is this—prophecy. The men of greatest vision are the seers. The false men are those whose vision is unheavenly. Saul might have been such a one; was until he saw reality. They are many. One of them was Robespierre, of whom there is a picture; he squeezing over a wine-cup a human heart. All treason to mankind lies in a false view of God.[1]

(2) *Obedience follows.* Many who have a fine vision and who dream great dreams do nothing else. When in the mood, they are filled with splendid conceptions and ideals, in which they revel with large emotion and passionate enthusiasm; but when they turn from the airy fabric of their vision, and touch hard fact, and

[1] M. W. Stryker.

see the task awaiting them as the legacy of the dream, their heart fails and they are helpless. These are the idealists of the world, who can plan great things for others or for themselves, but who cannot execute. Their lives are almost always barren of results and full of disappointments. Those who create great expectations, but who fail to realize them, are rightly banned with the name of *visionaries*; men who can see much, but who do nothing.

¶ There is no such grand failure in all the history of that mankind which genius has created for the world, as Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. And the abysmal depth into which he falls, the wide roads of agony which his very powers place in front of others, the whole sad missing of life's great end, come from his weakness at a single point—the point where Paul made connexion, vital and faithful, between his every vision of truth and his duty which waited to be done—the point where he was obedient to the heavenly vision. Every man of fine powers of thought is tempted by his powers, at that very point. It is so easy for a bright thinker to think so interestingly and so interestedly that thought becomes life and destiny to him. Our age, which has the two dangers of over-consciousness in the midst of tasks which it has set itself to do, an age whose best man has a temper which either meditates exclusively or acts exclusively, has for its finer souls, for its Hamlet or its Paul, no more subtle temptation than the attractions of a purely ideal life.[1]

> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action.

2. What is that which makes a man obedient or disobedient? It is the man's own will. For there are two mysteries in life, the one that men *can*, and the other that men *do*, resist Christ's pleading voice. As to the former, we cannot fathom it. But do not let any difficulty deaden the clear voice of our own consciousness. If I cannot trust my sense that I can do this thing or not do it, as I choose, there is nothing that I can trust. Will is the power of determining which of two roads I shall go, and, strange to say, it is incapable of statement in any more general terms than

[1] F. W. Gunsaulus.

the reiteration of the fact; yet here stands the fact, that God, the infinite Will, has given to men, whom He made in His own image, this inexplicable and awful power of coinciding with or opposing His purposes and His voice.

> Our wills are ours, we know not how;
> Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

For the other mystery is, that men *do* consciously set themselves against the will of God, and refuse the gifts which they know all the while are for their good. It is no use to say that sin is ignorance. No; that is only a surface explanation. We know too well that many a time when we have been as sure of what God wanted us to do as if we had seen it written in flaming letters on the sky, we have gone and done the exact opposite. There are men and women who are convinced in their inmost souls that they ought to be Christians, and that Jesus Christ is pleading with them at the present hour, and yet in whose hearts there is no yielding to what, they are certain, is the will and voice of Jesus Christ.

¶ You will say, perhaps, "I have not been obedient because I could not; I was not in a position to be so." If the Vision bade you do what you are not in a position to do, it was *not* a heavenly Vision at all; it was a product of your own fancy. Do you suppose the Lord Jesus does not know your circumstances, does not allow for your difficulties, does not consider your duties? If you want to follow the heavenly Vision, you *can*. If you want to love your neighbour, you *can*; God helping you. If you want to do him good, you *can*; if you are willing to take the trouble. If you want to make sacrifices, you *can*; if you are willing to pay the price. If you want to lay down *all* your life, little by little, bit by bit, at the Master's feet, in the service of humanity, you *can*; if you find grace to help in time of need.[1]

> But, above all, the victory is most sure
> For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
> To yield entire submission to the law
> Of conscience—conscience reverenced and obeyed,
> As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
> And His most perfect image in the world.[2]

[1] R. Winterbotham. [2] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*.

3. How does obedience to our visions affect us?

(1) It affects our *thinking*. From the writings of St. Paul we gather that two ideas had come prominently before his mind, and were borne in upon his soul, since his conversion, with astonishing sharpness and force. (*a*) The one was *the idea of sin*. Always the great Apostle had been a man of keen moral perception. He had studied, indeed, to much effect the moral Law. But until he realized "the heavenly vision," and entered into the mystery of the Cross of Christ, there was little of that sensitive consciousness of sin which is one measure of spiritual attainment in a serious Christian soul. Sin in its intrinsic dreadfulness; sin in its subtle approaches; sin in its essential contradiction to the Divine nature; sin in its mysterious power, to slacken which in human souls required nothing less than the sacrifice of the Son of God; sin in its awful chemical force for corrupting character; sin in the horror of its possible triumph, in the glory of its possible defeat; sin in its power to beget its train of weird and hideous children—pain and sorrow, moral misery and the wretchedness of death; sin in itself and in its consequences; sin in the mysterious secrecy of its beginning, in the awful vision of doom revealed as its close;—these things, from the vision on the Damascus wayside, bit deep into the heart of Paul. (*b*) And along with these a glorious hope, a glorious revelation—the revelation of *the love of God*. We who have heard the phrase so often can hardly imagine the joyful vividness with which that revelation broke upon the mind of Paul. The love of God, in its depth, its unmeasured greatness, its tenderness, its minute considerate sympathy, its personal application, its unfailing loyalty, its unflagging patience, its abounding resources, its wide-sweeping comprehensiveness, and above all in this fact, that it was made known, possible to realize, possible to embrace tenderly human although so exaltedly Divine, in the life, the character, the death, the sacrifice, the intercession, and the reign in glory, of Jesus Christ. To be loved, tenderly loved, suffered for and delivered,—this brought home to Paul the awfulness of the enemy from whom deliverance had been necessary even at such a price, and the dearness, and goodness, and kindness, and mercy of Him who "spared not his own Son," when that sacrifice was necessary, but "freely gave him for us all."

¶ If we have dreamed a dream which we have reason to think

is from the Lord, let us spare no effort to realize it, though it may take a lifetime to do it. If we have a thought which is in advance of our times, and at first sight perhaps a little Utopian, let us keep at it, if so be something may come of it. If some great design suggests itself to our mind, do not let us drop it because it is considered somewhat visionary, but work away at it till we get it brought within the region of the practical. In his beautiful poem of "Merlin and the Gleam" Tennyson has embodied, in the form of an allegory, his faith that "the ideal is indeed the *vera lux* which must lead the world"; and our duty to the "heavenly vision" was never more tersely expressed than in the closing couplet:

After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam.[1]

(2) It affects our *work*. The work of any man, on whatever material he has to exercise himself, is in fact the expression of his character. The change showed itself in the Apostle's work. It was not that there was greater diligence; Paul's diligence *was* unflagging, but so it had been before. His intensity and vigour made that certain; but it showed itself in an evidently keener sense of spiritual proportion. Perspective is often wanting in spiritual vision, and the sense of proportion is marred or destroyed. Benozzo Gozzoli, in the window adornments of the Ricasoli Palace, realized, as great masters had never done before, the power of perspective, and in doing so added keenness to his sense of proportion. Time, a narrow national aspiration, the slavish fulfilment of a preparatory law, a hard and rigorous monotheism, had widened out suddenly before Paul's astonished gaze into the wide horizons of eternity, and the tender and glorious landscapes of the kingdom of God. Great thoughts henceforth led him necessarily to the careful fulfilment of small duties. If he soars into the seventh heaven henceforth, it is to bring down the energy and love and considerate sympathy by which to help the runaway slave; to send kindly messages of reproof or affection to the pious ladies of Rome or Philippi; to open the treasures of his sympathetic tenderness to his young men converts—his "own sons"; to arrange for the offertories in Macedonia and Corinth; to manage the progress of his trade of tent-making so that he might honestly pay his way. Half the thoughts of men are out

[1] S. L. Wilson.

of proportion. Big measures and great questions are apt to seem to them the whole of life. "Obedience to a heavenly vision" means the habit of high thinking with scrupulous loyalty to small duties.

¶ In every way may men by looking unto Jesus in the heavens —and by discerning in Him the divineness necessary for the furtherance of their own individual salvation—become revealers to the world of divineness. The artist may discern in Jesus the Divine beauty of which he is called upon to be a setter-forth to the world. The poet may, by looking upon the heavenly vision, be guided into discerning the tenderer aspects of Divine truth. The man of science too may be enabled to carry on his researches into the great world of Nature, and to recognize it more and more as the very outcome of God's own life; even he may be enabled to do this by looking upon the heavenly vision of the Divine Aider of all reverent seekers after knowledge of His ways and works.[1]

¶ Quixotism, or Utopianism: that is another of the devil's pet words. I believe the quiet admission which we are all of us so ready to make, that, because things have long been wrong, it is impossible they should ever be right, is one of the most fatal sources of misery and crime from which this world suffers. Whenever you hear a man dissuading you from attempting to do well, on the ground that perfection is "Utopian," beware of that man. Cast the word out of your dictionary altogether. There is no need for it. Things are either possible or impossible—you can easily determine which, in any given state of human science. If the thing is impossible, you need not trouble yourselves about it; if possible try for it. It is very Utopian to hope for the entire doing away with drunkenness and misery out of the Canongate; but the Utopianism is not our business—the *work* is. It is Utopian to hope to give every child in this kingdom the knowledge of God from its youth; but the Utopianism is not our business—the *work* is.[2]

(3) It affects our *character*. The change *showed* itself in St. Paul's work: it *was* in his character. There was, no doubt, the beautiful foundation long laid in his nature and his conscientious life; he could scarcely help being sincere, possessing delicacy of tact, being in the widest sense strongly and sweetly true. But his sympathies were enlarged; he was to an unparalleled degree identified with human nature. He could say as few could, "Nihil humanum a me alienum puto." What was human, since

[1] H. N. Grimley. [2] Ruskin, *Architecture and Painting*, 89.

he had known the Divine and human Christ, was near and dear to Paul. There is sometimes a danger in sympathetic characters of some flaw of weakness. Not a touch of weakness in him. Strong, unflinching, unswerving, decided. Probably never, except in his Divine Master, was there such a combination of tenderness and strength. Think of his woman-like tenderness towards Timothy! Think of his lion-like strength in the face of Galatian treason to Christ! Certainly in his nature there was a very wonderful combination of qualities; but here they are reinforced, chastened, extended, when once he has impressed upon his soul the personality of Christ, when once he is "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

¶ Remember that it is not saints and heroes alone who are privileged to see visions; it is ordinary folk like ourselves who hear these voices from heaven and these calls to duty. Men become heroes and saints, in God's eyes if not in men's, by obeying those calls. Father Damien was not a saint when he went to Molokai, nor Livingstone a hero when he went to Africa. The visions came to them when they were as undistinguished as ever. But then they obeyed the call: and still to-day men obey the call.[1]

III.

The Reward of Obedience.

The reward of obeying one vision is the gift of another. There were five visions given successively to the Apostle Paul. There are five visions graciously granted to every one who is obedient. And when the fifth vision comes, which is the vision of Ministry, it comes in four different ways for four different purposes.

i. St. Paul's Visions.

1. First, St. Paul was obedient to the heavenly vision that arrested him, that convicted him, that changed the whole current of his being, and adjusted his whole life towards God. That is the vision of our text. Its experience is usually spoken of as the Conversion of St. Paul.

2. But St. Paul was also obedient to the heavenly vision that enlightened him, that equipped him, that empowered him for

[1] J. M. Wilson.

holiness, witness, and all aspects of service. "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts ix. 12), "and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." Then the seventeenth verse: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way that thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." He was enlightened, equipped, and empowered for witness and for all service.

3. St. Paul was obedient also to the heavenly vision in which he saw his self-life crucified and slain, and his heart cleansed for the enthronement and reign of Christ. The passage is 2 Cor. xii. 1–10. Marvellous vision it is, with a wonderful combination of realities in it: paradise, the third heaven, balanced by the thorn in the flesh, a vision closing with a sufficiency of grace, wholly grace, only grace, self and self-life renounced and crucified, that the power of Christ alone might rest and work through His servant.

4. And St. Paul was obedient to the heavenly vision in which he saw the appalling condition of a lost world, and took up and carried to the last the burden, not of theological problems, but of perishing souls. This vision was obtained at Troas. He saw a man of Macedonia, who prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

5. Last of all, St. Paul was obedient to that heavenly vision in which he saw the finished course securing the Master's approval, in which he saw the mark for the prize of the high calling in his own perfect conformity and likeness to his Master, and in which he saw the prize itself in the gift of the crown by his Master. Study that wonderful passage, 2 Tim. iv. 8, and you will see these things, and study it in connection with the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians.[1]

ii. Our Visions.

1. First there is that vision of the Lord which marks the opening of the soul to God. There are those in whom the life of

God has begun so early, so sweetly, and so gradually that they can no more tell when they began to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour than they can tell when they first saw their mother's smile. The question is, Have we now a sight of Christ in our soul?

2. But if we were obedient to this vision we got another vision. When we tried to follow in the footsteps of Christ, we were conscious of the infinite distance between Him, the Holy One, and ourselves, full of all uncleanness; Him, the Loving One, and us, full of all selfishness; Him, the Humble One, and us, full of pride and vanity. And as we tried to follow Him, we also found that we dared not approach God, because we felt by the side of Christ our own pollution, our own wickedness, and not only our wickedness, but our guilt. And as we studied the teaching of Christ, we saw that Christ does not simply say, Do as I do, and it shall be well, but "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost." Then we heard the voice of John the Baptist saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Then we had a vision of One hanging upon a Cross for us, and we felt that the majesty of God's law was never more revered and honoured than on that Cross. And the infinite love of God through Christ crucified was poured upon us in boundless streams of mercy. What a vision that was! Have we been obedient to that vision?

3. If we have been obedient to that heavenly vision, then we have had another vision after a while. We find not only that Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, but that He claims to be our Lord and Master. By His redemption He has not only delivered us, but purchased us. We are bought with a price. We are not our own. And then, perhaps, comes a great struggle. We are willing enough to have our sins forgiven and give some of our heart and time and gifts to Christ. But He must have everything.

4. Then we have another vision. We are astonished to find out that although we have received Christ as a Sin-bearer and as a Master, though it seems to us that we have the best intentions and desires, yet the law of sin in our very members makes us cry

out, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Christ shows us that the secret lies in fellowship with Him, fellowship with Him in His resurrection and in His power. That is no easy thing. But He will make it easy. When we see that it is the gift of God, when every man has been crucified with Him, when we accept death as a gift as we accept life, all things are made new. Then it seems as though we began the Christian life over again. We say with the Apostle, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

5. We have considered Christ in succession first as Leader, then as Lamb, then as Lord, then as Life. There is yet another vision—a vision of duty and of blessedness. And in this vision we enjoy Likeness. Was it not said of Him that He went about doing good? Is this not the last characteristic and likeness between Father and Son, that "My Father worketh hitherto and I work"?[1]

iii. The Visions of the Servant.

The fifth of the visions already considered is both for St. Paul and for us a vision of service. That vision needs fuller consideration. It is in four parts.

1. Of the four visions which more or less seize the imagination and fire the heart of Christ's ministers, first comes the vision which *summons us* to be the living voice of the Divine oracles, the ministers of reconciliation between God and men. This was Isaiah's vision. "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

2. The second vision is the vision that *sends us.* It points us to the place where we are to labour, and to the people whom we are to serve, and to the fellows with whom our work is to be done, and it may be to those who are to train us in doing it. St. Paul is our pattern here. "After they were come to Mysia, they

[1] Theodore Monod.

essayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

3. The third vision deepens, widens, expands, *matures us*, turning youth into manhood, and summoning us to the midsummer of life. It was St. Peter's at Joppa. The vessel descending out of heaven with all manner of fourfooted beasts, and the accompanying voice, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," and the significant monition, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common," had set the Apostle thinking and wondering, when suddenly the messengers of Cornelius stood at his door, and the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek thee." That vision with all that came out of it, meant the immediate opening of the Gentile world to Christ. It was also a new era of idea, of duty, of conquest for the Apostle. The struggle it must have meant for a conscientious Hebrew Christian it is very hard for us adequately to measure. But growth with pain is the very principle of life; pain not only of body, but of soul—not only of soul, but of mind.

4. The fourth vision is the vision which *sustains us*. It was St. John's. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." This vision sustains because it inspires. It inspires us with hope for the future, and that hope, being sure and steadfast, sustains us in the present.[1]

[1] A. W. Thorold.

Not Ashamed of the Gospel.

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NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.—Rom. i. 16.

ST. PAUL is led to use this expression by an association of ideas which it is easy to trace. He is writing to a church, founded by other hands than his, founded, it would seem, some years before, but by no apostle or apostolic man. As befits an Apostle, he yearns to visit this church that he may impart to it some spiritual gift. He has desired to visit it long ere now; but again and again he has been hindered. He still hopes some day to carry out this purpose. For he has in his keeping a truth, which, as he believes, belongs by right to every human being, although as yet only a few members of the great human family have claimed it as their own. He, for his part, is, in his own words, a debtor until all rights are satisfied; and his creditors comprise the world. "I am a debtor," he exclaims, "both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the philosophers and the unintelligent." Therefore he must do what he may do, always and everywhere. Therefore he will add, "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also."

In Rome also! It might seem as if a word had escaped him which, even for an Apostle, had some magic power. For here, suddenly, his thought takes a new direction and a wider range. In Rome also! The little, half-organized Church disappears from view, and before the imagination of St. Paul there rises—indistinct, no doubt, but oppressively vast—the imperial form of the mistress of the world. And this vision of Rome, thus for the moment present to the Apostle's mind, produces in it a momentary recoil; so that, like a man whose onward course has been sharply checked, he falls back to consider the resources at his disposal. He falls back upon himself, upon the faith that is in him, upon the Author and Object of that faith. There is a moment's pause, and then

he writes, "I am not ashamed." If he were speaking he might almost seem to falter in his tone: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

¶ His restrained expression, "I am not ashamed," is the stronger for its very moderation. It witnesses to the fixed purpose of his heart and attitude of his mind, whilst it suggests that he was well aware of all the temptations in Rome to being ashamed of it there.

The text forms the transition from the introduction to the theme of the Epistle. That theme is *the Gospel, the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes.* Its power lies not alone in the pure ethical truths it makes known, nor in the system of rewards and punishments with which its sanctions are enforced, but in the (δύναμις = dynamic) power of God's clemency, righteousness, and holiness, as revealed in, and made effectual through, the Gospel. In the Gospel is embodied at once the Divine message and the Divine efficiency which saves every one that believes—whatever his rank or race, kindred or relation.

I. What is this Gospel of which St. Paul says he is not ashamed?

II. Why should he be ashamed of it?

III. Why is he not ashamed of it?

I.

What is the Gospel?

1. If any of us, upon a certain morning in the spring of the year 58 A.D., had walked down the long street that led from the city of Corinth to the harbour of Lechæum, we might have witnessed a scene which looked common enough at the time to the loungers on the quays, but is full of interest now to us who understand all that it means. Beside one of the wharves a ship is lying, just on the point of sailing for Italy. The sailors are bustling about in obedience to the captain's orders, while the passengers are taking leave of their friends upon the shore. Of the various groups which are gathered there we have to do with only one. The central figure is a middle-aged woman, evidently one of the intending passengers. Around her are

gathered several friends who have come down to the harbour to see her off. Among these is one man, little in stature and insignificant in his general appearance, but with a face that bears the marks of deep thought, of hard study, of resolute will. This man, as he bids farewell to the woman I have mentioned, draws from beneath his arm a bulky roll of manuscript, which he gives to her with careful instructions as to its proper delivery. And then the last farewells are said, the passengers step on board, the helmsman takes his place, the sails are hoisted, the vessel glides slowly from the shore, and soon is cutting her way across the fair Gulf of Corinth—the blue water curving upwards from her prow and falling off in snowy sheets of foam. I cannot tell you that vessel's name; I cannot tell you what kind of general cargo she carried; but this I can say, she had a treasure on board more precious to the world than a shipload of the purest gold. For that little man with the striking face whom we saw standing on the quay was Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles; that woman to whom he spoke was Phœbe, the deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea and Paul's sister in the Lord; while that roll of manuscript which Paul gave to Phœbe was the Epistle written from Corinth to the Church which was in Rome, an Epistle of such consummate importance to the future of Christianity that Renan is hardly exaggerating when he makes the startling statement that Phœbe, as she sailed away from Corinth, "carried beneath the folds of her robe the whole future of Christian theology." The Apostle begins this great letter by sending his salutations to the Christians at Rome, and expressing his desire to preach the Gospel in their midst. He feels that the possession of the Gospel puts him under a positive obligation to preach it—making him a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians. What is this Gospel?[1]

2. St. Paul has given to us in his own rapid way a summary statement, abbreviated to the very bone, and reduced to the barest elements, of what he meant by the Gospel. What is the irreducible minimum? The facts of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as you will find written in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. So, then, to begin with, the

[1] J. C. Lambert.

Gospel is not a statement of principles, but a record of facts, things that have happened in this world of ours. But the least part of a fact is the visible part of it, and it is of no significance unless it has explanation; and so Paul goes on to bind up with the facts an explanation of them. The mere fact that Jesus, a young Nazarene, was executed is no more a gospel than the other one, that two brigands were crucified beside Him. But the fact that could be seen, plus the explanation which underlies and interprets it, turns the chronicle into a gospel, and the explanation begins with the name of the Sufferer; for if you want to understand His death you must understand who it was that died. His death is pathetic in all aspects, and very precious in many. But when we hear "Christ died according to the Scriptures," the whole symbolism of the ancient ritual and all the glowing anticipations of the prophets rise up before us, and that death assumes an altogether different aspect. If we stop with "Jesus died," then that death may be a beautiful example of heroism, a sweet, pathetic instance of innocent suffering, a conspicuous example of the world's wages to the world's teachers, but it is little more. If, however, we take St. Paul's words upon our lips, "Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached . . . how that Christ died, . . . according to the Scriptures," the fact flashes up into solid beauty, and becomes the Gospel of our salvation. And the explanation goes on, "How that Christ died for our sins." Now it is difficult to see in what intelligible sense the Death of Christ can be held to have been for, or on behalf of our sins—that is, that they may be swept away and we delivered from them—unless the atoning nature of His sacrifice for sins is admitted. The explanation goes on, "And that he was buried." Why that trivial detail? Partly because it guarantees the fact of His Death, partly because of its bearing on the evidences of His Resurrection. "And that he rose from the dead according to the Scriptures." Great fact, without which Christ is a shattered prop, and "ye are yet in your sins."

3. And St. Paul was not alone in this construction of his message. We hear a great deal to-day about Pauline Christianity, with the implication, and sometimes with the assertion, that he was the inventor of what, for the sake of using a brief and

easily intelligible term, may be called Evangelical Christianity. Now, it is a very illuminating thought for the reading of the New Testament that there are, roughly, three sets of teaching, the Pauline, Petrine, and Johannine, and you cannot find the distinctions between these three in any difference as to the fundamental contents of the Gospel; for if Paul rings out, "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," Peter declares, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and John, from his island solitude, sends across the waters the hymn of praise, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." And so the proud declaration of the Apostle, which he dared not have ventured upon in the face of the acrid criticism he had to meet unless he had known he was perfectly sure of his ground, is natural and warranted—"Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach."

¶ Thus, as arising out of the historical facts, the Gospel becomes the presence of Christ in the soul. It is precisely this, and only this, that makes the Gospel to be for us a Gospel. It is the transcendent miracle of the power of the Cross. What is the crowning fact of Church History throughout these nineteen centuries? Is it not the unceasing stream of testimony of believers who have realized the redeeming and sanctifying power of Christ in their own lives? We meet with it in the great hymns of the Church, in its most spiritual thinkers, in the musings of its mystics, in the triumphant shout of its martyrs, in the battles of its reformers, and in the biographies of its saints. Everywhere it is the personal experience of the redeeming and conquering Christ. "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father."

4. But above all else, it was for St. Paul, and it must be for us, the Gospel of the grace of God. It is God's *free gift* of salvation. In this sense it was new, in this sense news and good news. The Gospel is still essentially new in its proclamation of the method of salvation by grace. All other messages had said, "Do this and live." "Perform some ritual,

make a pilgrimage, torture yourself, pay something, so shall you be saved."

¶ Dr. Sven Hedin, in recounting his recent travels in Tibet, speaks of coming to a Holy Mountain. Around this mountain pilgrims from remote parts of Asia were wearily trudging. When asked why they were doing this, the reply was that so they hoped to find salvation. Another traveller in the same region speaks of observing near a monastery a hole in a wall near the ground. Placed near it was a platter with some coarse food on it. Presently a shrivelled, gaunt hand was seen to be thrust out through the hole and the food taken. "Who lives down there?" asked the travellers. "Oh, a very holy man," was the reply. "How long has he been in that dungeon?" "Twenty-five years." "Has he ever been out?" "No." "Will he ever come out?" "Not till he is carried out a dead man." Ah! this is the universal heresy, the perennial error: that men can earn their salvation; pay for it; do something to merit it. And the Gospel comes in with its reversal of human imaginations, saying, "The gift of God is eternal life"; and that is news indeed.[1]

II.

Why should he be Ashamed of it?

1. *It was so insignificant.* He had just written down the word Rome in his letter. Now that which impressed every subject of the Empire when his thoughts turned towards Rome, was its unrivalled grandeur. The very name of Rome was the symbol of magnificence and power. For Rome was the seat of empire; the city which had conquered and which ruled the world. Rome was the centre of society; she welcomed to her receptions all that was noble and wealthy and distinguished; all the year round her palaces were thronged by dependent kings and princes. Rome was the nurse and patroness of such learning and thought as was tolerated by the political jealousies of the Imperial age; the great days of Athens were already of the past; literature was too much of a courtier to take up its abode contentedly in a conquered province. Nay, Rome was, in a sense, a great religious centre too, or at least a great centre of the current religions. At that date, all that was spiritual, as well as all that was debased and superstitious and grotesque,

[1] H. Windross.

found a place and a haunt in Rome; with magnificent impartiality, she smiled a welcome to all the truths and all the falsehoods that presented themselves at her gates. And the Gospel—how did it look when placed in juxtaposition with the greatness of Rome? Was it not, relatively to everything in the great capital, as far as the natural sense and judgment of man could pierce, poor and insignificant? The best informed, who deigned now and then to bestow a thought upon the morbid fancies of the Eastern world, could have distinguished in it only a rebellious offshoot from the most anti-social and detested religion in the Empire; it was itself an "exitiabilis superstitio"; and it had about it a touch of inconsequence and absurdity from which Judaism was free. The estimate which an average French Academician might be supposed to form of Quakerism is probably not unlike the estimate which approved itself to the most cultivated minds in Rome as due to the religion of St. Paul and St. John.

¶ Paul's word is alive to-day. Where is the word of Nero? Paul's Gospel is as much as ever the power of God. The Rome of Nero we dig for to-day beneath its burial mounds. On the ruins of old Rome, the message which Paul preached has built a spiritual empire many times wider than the empire of the Cæsars. The obscure missionary who was led on foot through the Appian Gate among the throng of passengers, bound to a soldier of Nero's army, has proved the mightier of the two; and who shall say to-day at Rome that Paul had any cause to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ?[1]

2. *It was so unpopular.* St. Paul was well aware that there were features of the Christian Creed, and those not outlying or accidental, but of its very core and essence, which were in the highest degree unwelcome to the non-Christian world. Less than this he cannot mean by such an expression as "the offence of the Cross"; or when he speaks of "Christ crucified" as being "foolishness" to the Greeks. How was this Gospel then to make its way to the hearts and convictions of men? How was this mysterious teaching—familiar enough to a generation which has learned from infancy to repeat the Creed of Christendom, but strange beyond all measure to the men who heard it from its first preachers in the towns and villages of heathendom—how was

[1] J. O. Dykes.

it to compass acceptance and victory? Between the means employed and the contemplated result there must be some kind of correspondence and proportion: what was the weapon by which the Gospel hoped to win the obedience of the world?

¶ Why are people sometimes unwilling to own that which in their best moments they are convinced of? They know it is the truth, but shrink from saying so; they believe it is right, but they do not appear as its champions. Why? Well, perhaps it is an unpopular truth, perhaps there is a considerable body of social tradition against it; it would be very awkward to own it; it might bring them into collision with friends, possibly with relatives; there might be very unhappy divisions, social ostracism, and even keen and acute suffering. Or, what is worse to bear, there might be a widespread cynical smile on the face of society; to the general average they might appear almost as simpletons, or half-mad. It is certainly not the most agreeable thing to have people suspicious of your sanity, and suggesting that you must be the victim of some strange delusion. It must be admitted that there are many temptations to leave an unpopular truth unchampioned and even unowned, that is, to be ashamed of it. Such temptations as I have mentioned did, as a matter of fact, assail Paul. To become a Christian apostle meant national ostracism and family disruption. His own people looked upon him as an apostate from the faith of his fathers. We know how this brought upon him abuse and persecution. Willingness to own the new faith in the face of this meant courage of no mean order. "Thine own people are against thee," it would be said. Still, he was *not ashamed!*[1]

¶ If the cause of truth is to be carried to victory, it will be by men who will not be ashamed of it, whatever difficulty, or suffering, or disgrace it may bring. Reformers, at least, are not made of men who shrink from owning truth at a crisis. Any weakling can come along with the stream.

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

[1] T. R. Williams.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonised for hurled the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design.

Lowell had such men as Paul in his mind when he sang those lines. And he tells their secret in the words, "Mastered by their faith divine." If we want to know how men come to such heroism, we must remember that it is no question of their holding such and such a faith, but of their faith possessing and holding them.[1]

¶ Lord Nelson refused to put on a cloak to cover up the stars on his uniform, though they made him a mark for the French sharpshooters. So let us refuse to hide our loyalty to Christ by the cloak of silence, even when by speaking we may become a mark for ridicule.

3. But there is also the *natural reluctance to speak of one's most intimate concerns.* Those to whom the saving power of Christ's Cross is most intimately certain, as being to them a matter of personal experience, cannot at once, and without difficulty, bring themselves to say much about it. We do not, any of us, readily talk about that which most nearly touches us. Men have no objection to talk politics in public, even when they feel strongly on political questions; and the reason is, because politics address themselves not to that which is exclusively personal, but only to those common sympathies and judgments which we share with some section of our countrymen. But no man will consent, if he can help it, to discuss his near relatives, or a family interest, in public. This is not because the details of private life do not interest other people; every one must know how very far this is from being true. It is because the feelings which they arouse in those concerned are too tender to bear exposure. And this motive operates not infrequently in the case of religion. Religion, even in its lower and more imperfect forms, twines itself round the heart like a family affection; it is throned in an inner

[1] T. R. Williams.

sanctuary of the soul, the door of which is closed to all except a very few, if not indeed to everybody. Religion has its outward and visible side; its public acts of homage; its recognized obligations. But its real strength and empire is within; it is in regions where spiritual activity neither meets the eye nor commits itself to language. All to whom our Saviour is a real Being know that their souls have had, and have, relations with Him which belong to the most sacred moments of life. If we may employ a metaphor which Holy Scripture suggests, they hesitate to discuss these relations almost as naturally as a bride would shrink from taking the world into her confidence.

¶ Often in exact proportion to the reality of a religious experience may be the difficulty of making it public property; and one of the most trying features in a man's work may consist in his having to make a perfectly sincere proclamation of that which he knows to be true, after actual contact with it in the chambers of his own soul. Doubtless a nature so human and sympathetic as St. Paul's would have felt this difficulty in its full force; yet we know how completely, how generously, he overcame it. In his large, self-forgetting charity, he has made his inmost life—its darkest as well as its brightest passages—the common heritage of the world. If he did not yield to the instinct which would have sealed his lips, this was because he knew that the Gospel of his Lord and Master was not really, like some family secret, a private matter. The Friend of his soul, Who knew its wants and weaknesses, Who had healed its diseases, Who was privy to its inmost confidence, was surely the true and much-needed Friend of every human being; and therefore no false reserve could persuade St. Paul to treat the Gospel as if it concerned himself alone, or to shrink from saying with the Psalmist, "Come near, and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul."[1]

¶ In St. Paul the personal has become the universal, and it has become somehow the universal pleading with each. If he speaks of himself, it is not that you may take note of him personally; it is that you may see in him what you can be and have and know; it is that you may feel through him who has known it something that is the common need and hope of humanity. The secret of St. Paul is that when he speaks of himself most directly, when he places himself in the very centre of the picture, he has entirely forgotten himself, he hardly knows

[1] H. P. Liddon.

that he exists or counts. "Not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me." [1]

III.

Why is he not Ashamed of It?

1. Because, with all its seeming weakness, the Gospel is *Power*. The Apostle's word is used to indicate inherent power in active operation. In the Gospel there is a certain force which is brought into exercise every time it is received—a force so great, so manifest in its effects, that it may be placed alongside those great natural forces in the world which modern science has made so vivid and real to our minds. We shall not err if we think of it as a force in the same sense as that in which science has revealed to us the great forces of nature. It is a principle operating in the world of human nature on a vast and continually enlarging scale, and taking effect in a countless number of individuals to their moral and spiritual betterment. In its own particular sphere of operation, it may be thought of in the same way as we think of a force like heat, or electricity, or gravitation, in its sphere. These are different and familiar forces, each with its own distinctive powers, capable of producing certain well-known effects. They are real forces with which we have to reckon, and which we can neither make nor unmake, mend nor mar. We may not understand everything about them; we may not be able to explain their origin, as we certainly are unable to produce them. They are there, and their powers are forces which we neglect at our peril. They testify to their existence, and to what they can do, by their effects. They are silent in their working, and, but for the effects produced, we could have no proof of their existence. A volcanic upheaval, an earthquake that changes the configuration of the countryside, a hurricane that flattens a forest, all work unseen, all are the outcome of hidden force, and are only made manifest in their effects. Such a force or power is the Gospel in a higher sphere. It is a force whose reality is demonstrated, not by the arguments of the theologian, but by what it does. Its proof is dynamical, not logical. It has proved itself in human experience as a power to arouse the conscience

[1] A. L. Lilley.

to bring it into activity and give it direction, to inspire devotion and reverence, and to kindle affection for what is pure and good, holy, and godlike.

¶ We often observe, and are always impressed by, the various forms of power in nature, and in matter, in mind and in man. We see one of its forms in the gentle breeze and in the desolating cyclone. We see another in the noiseless current of the stream and the fury of the mountain torrent. We see yet another in the brightness of the lightning spark and the crashing of the thunderbolt. Physical science, moreover, has brought to our knowledge other great powers of nature. She has demonstrated the universal prevalence of gravitation in the material world. She has taught us the practical application of steam to the utilities of life—to travel, commerce, manufactures. Still more recently in the subtle forces of magnetism and electricity an agent has been found, capable of a wonderfully impulsive and beneficial influence upon the age. It not only wafts our messages across a continent or an ocean, in a moment, but yields us light so brilliant and powerful that night cannot abide in its presence. While for certain human maladies it proves itself a most effectual antidote.[1]

¶ Christianity is the religion of power. The Gospel is not primarily a system for the intellect, though it certainly does present a reasoned system for the intellect; it is not primarily an appeal to the emotions, though it certainly does appeal very touchingly to the emotions; it is first and foremost, as the Apostle said, "the power of God unto salvation." The message it brings is a message of power, the gift it offers is a gift of power, the men it produces are men of power. And the Gospel of Jesus is the Gospel for this century just because to persons oppressed by the strain of rapidly changing conditions, harassed by forces which they cannot escape, and by passions which they cannot subdue, and by mysteries which they cannot resolve, it opens out an inexhaustible supply of life, of strength, of energy, of confidence, and of power.[2]

¶ At a preaching-place in Japan not long ago, a young student who had formerly been an opponent of Christianity boldly stood forth and gave his testimony before the astonished crowd. He asked them how it was that such a change could have come over him as to make him a follower of Christ? And this was his own answer: "It is because the religion of Jesus is a religion of power. I studied earnestly the doctrines of Buddha and Confucius, but the more I studied the less peace I had. I

[1] J. Little. [2] F. Homes Dudden, *Christ and Christ's Religion*, 189.

had no power to carry out the teaching. In Christ we find truly the power to save men from sin."[1]

¶ Ask the doctor what is his best help, who is his best nurse, what is his most certain medicine, and he will say, "Nature." My dear doctor, spell it in one syllable. Say not nature, but God! For what is the difference between nature and God? The great fundamental truth is that we are environed by powers that are not our own. And I will not go to an orthodox authority, but I will ask Herbert Spencer to tell us what this power is in that famous definition of his: "Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the absolute certainty that we are ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from whom all things proceed." What is this but the statement, in the language of modern philosophy, of the old Hebrew Psalmist's declaration, Power belongeth unto God. And what is the result of all modern science but this: a skill to lay hold on this Power that is not our own, and to make it our own by obedience to its laws?[2]

Who that one moment has the least descried him,
  Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside him,
  Pleasures and powers that are not and that are,—

Ay amid all men bear himself thereafter
  Smit with a solemn and a sweet surprise,
Dumb to their scorn and turning to their laughter
  Only the dominance of earnest eyes?[3]

2. Because it is *the Power of God.* The Gospel is a Divine power, the power "of God," personally exerted, having its origin in God Himself, and with all His omnipotence behind it. It is not a mere vague impersonal force abstracted from its origin, a force which God has set agoing in the world and left to work itself out in accordance with its appointed mode of action. St. Paul conceives this power as essentially a mode of personal activity. In it is exerted the personal power of God; it is His own direct method of dealing with men, of conveying to them the knowledge of His truth and His love. Behind its proclamation is God's own personal energy, working in it and permeating it through and through to make it effective for His purposes.

[1] *C.M.S. Annual Report*, 1899, p. 382.
[2] Lyman Abbott.
[3] F. W. H. Myers, *St. Paul.*

¶ The Roman legions marching like a vital machine, resistless, invincible; driving their roads as arrows across the plains and over the mountains, neither marsh, nor river, nor forest diverting them from their track; bringing the whole known world into subjection to their single, central city—they represent *power*. In this proud city the spoils of the world were gathered. In its senate the destinies of nations were determined. Opulent, arrogant, exclusive, Rome was the proudest and most powerful centre of government the world has ever seen. Cæsar was the deified representative of imperial majesty and might. No one knew this better than Paul. In every region, in every city he visited, he saw and felt the might of Rome. He knew that when he went to the Mother City he would be in the very presence of the supreme expression of secular power. Yet, though he was poor, of weak bodily presence, though his doctrine was that of the Cross, he was nothing daunted. The reason was that the Gospel he preached was also a *power*. A power greater than Rome. It was the *power of God*.[1]

¶ In the physical domain itself, what is man's power compared with the awful exhibitions of the power of God, the power that lies behind the hurricane, that rocks the mountains in the earthquake, that strikes with the lightning and speaks in the roar of the thunder? Napoleon, the last of the aspirants to universal empire built on physical force, when he marched his great army against Moscow, was not defeated by the Russians. The Muscovites burnt their city and withdrew. Then there appeared a different foe. General Winter came into the field and marshalled his forces, hail and snow, and the north wind. The French sentries in the morning were found standing white and frozen at their posts—like Lot's wife—warning the Corsican to flee before the vengeance of the forces of nature. And all along the line of his retreat the elements carried on a guerilla warfare. From Moscow to the Baltic the track of the discomfited army was marked by the dead.

What does the Gospel possess that makes it a demonstration of the power of God? Two things especially.

(1) The first element of the dynamic content of the Gospel is *the love of God*. In this, salvation had its originating motive and cause. In this is the spring and source of the Gospel's power on the human heart. The very conception of salvation originated in God's love.

[1] W. Pierce.

¶ A missionary from India once told this story to a meeting at which I was present. She said, "I went with another missionary out into one of the Hindu villages to preach. It was a low-caste village, and the low-caste women were sitting on the ground. My sister began her sermon, and she said to them, "God is love, and God loves you." One of the women asked, "What is love?" Just think of that, a woman asking what is love! The poor missionary turned to her friend and said, "What can I do when a woman does not know what love is?" And she replied, "Ask these mothers how they feel towards their children." The preacher turned to one poor woman sitting there half-naked, rocking her half-naked baby in her arms, and said, "How do you feel towards your babies?" And the woman said, "I am a poor, low-caste woman, how can I tell how I feel towards my baby?" The missionary answered, "Oh yes, you can; you do know"; and the mother replied, "I do not know; I feel a kind of going out of my heart towards my baby." "Yes," said the missionary, "that is it, and God feels a kind of going out of His heart to you." Is not that "good news?" You have come in here, out of sorrow, out of sin, out of a wrestling and tugging with life—is not this "good news" you can really take to your heart, that the Eternal and the Infinite has a kind of going out of His heart to you?[1]

(2) The second element of the dynamic content of the Gospel is *the righteousness of God* which it reveals. Whenever men awaken to a consciousness of guilt, they wish to work out a righteousness of their own; they think they can accomplish it by keeping the law. We are taught in this Epistle and elsewhere that we cannot achieve this, but that another righteousness is needed and is provided. In the verse following the text, we are instructed that in the Gospel, "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." The righteousness of God does not here mean the moral rectitude which inheres in His nature as one of its attributes; it means the justifying righteousness which He bestows on every one who believes on His Son.

¶ Ruskin says that the root of almost every heresy from which the Church of Rome has ever suffered has been the effort of man to earn, rather than to receive, his salvation. It is very humbling to have to owe everything to the mercy of God; we would fain have something of our own, to commend us to ourselves, if not to Him. Nothing can meet this need or melt our pride, save the persuasion that sinners though we are, God

[1] Lyman Abbott.

loves us; for at the hand of love we can accept what we have not earned. And this persuasion the Gospel works in the heart of those who with meekness receive it. When we yield ourselves to the influence of Jesus, and let the message He brings of the love of God be illumined for us by the life He lived, and the death He died, faith is born. The love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit.[1]

¶ A quaint Scotch preacher said that the needle of the law opens the way for and carries the thread of the Gospel. I once quoted this saying in a tent-meeting and a hearer remarked to me afterwards: "Yes, you're right; but the needle should be pulled out and not left behind." [2]

3. The third reason why the Apostle is not ashamed of the Gospel is because it is the power of God *unto Salvation.* This power of God is a power to work men's deliverance, and that in the deepest sense. Roman emperors shortly after Paul's time are commemorated in public inscriptions as "saviours of the world," in the sense of maintaining peace and order. But the Gospel salvation is of a deeper sort. It is salvation from the bondage of sin, a salvation which enables men to be truly and eternally free, a salvation which implies, on the one hand, deliverance from sin and its consequences, and on the other, the communication of eternal life. The Gospel, that is to say, is not only a power, not only God's power, but God's power exerted to save men. Its mission in the world is unto salvation.

¶ What is salvation? Negatively, the removal and sweeping away of all evil, physical and moral, as the Schools speak. Positively, the inclusion of all good for every part of the composite nature of a man which the man can receive and which God can bestow. And that is the task which the Gospel sets to itself.[3]

¶ Our common phrase, "safe and sound," is the best translation of the term salvation as the Apostle used it.

¶ When we pass from the Psalms to the Epistles we are conscious of a change. We live in a larger world and come into contact with new ideas. What is the secret of the change? What is the master-thought of the Epistles? What is their characteristic, dominant, invariable note? Without going into any elaborate proof let us say that it is the experience of Christ in the sovereignty of His grace, the experience of His kingly

[1] R. A. Leudrum. [2] H. G. Guinness. [3] A. Maclaren.

illimitable power to save the soul, to save it to the uttermost, to expel all its usurpers root and branch, to break it down to penitence and surrender, and through conquering it to ennoble it for Himself for ever and to crown it with a perfect salvation. It stands out in the great typical words—grace, holiness, power, joy, victory. The presence of Christ in the soul as its victorious Redeemer and its adorable King is the master-thought of the Epistles.[1]

4. It is the power of God unto salvation *to every one that believeth.* This Gospel, which is God's power unto salvation, St. Paul felt he could carry without discredit to Rome, because it requires only one condition, and that the simplest, for the exertion of its power. It saves "every one that believeth." It is God's power to save, on the simplest condition, all men, Jew or Greek, to save man as man without any social or national distinctions. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is one way of setting in motion the power that is unto salvation, and that is by believing the Gospel and its message.

¶ The power which resides in a word, or which operates through a word, requires one (and no more than one) condition for its operation—it must be believed. Old Eli, bowed with the weight of years, sat in the city gate of Shiloh, when a message came to him which had in it a power of death. But if Eli had not believed the fatal tidings of that Benjamite who professed to report the disastrous issue of the day's engagement, he would not have fallen dead in a fit by the side of the gate. The message which another Benjamite spoke at midnight to the Roman jailor had in it, on the contrary, a power of spiritual life. But if that jailor had not received Paul's record of God concerning His Son, no life could have visited his rude, dark, heathen soul.[2]

¶ The power of God in His Gospel operates in a way different from His power in nature or on matter. The grace which provides and offers salvation to the fallen family of man, is not a physical but a moral power. God does not compel any one to accept His offer; to do so would destroy moral freedom. But physical forces always act necessarily and uniformly. There is no voluntariness in their operations. When, therefore, the power of the Gospel is brought to bear on the heart, we act freely, whether we accept or reject it. If the heart is receptive the Spirit of God accompanying the word produces faith and newness

[1] W. Redfern. [2] J. O. Dykes.

of life. If, on the other hand, the heart is cold and repellent, the same word produces unbelief and hardness of heart. Hence the same Gospel message is to one that hears it, "the savour of life unto life," and to another, "the savour of death unto death."

¶ Matthew Arnold, in his once famous book on "Literature and Dogma," describes the work of Jesus, in bringing in a new righteousness, as consisting especially in two things, which he calls the method and the secret of Jesus. But the method of Jesus he strangely misapprehends; for he gives no place to faith, but makes it consist altogether in repentance, in attention to conduct, in the keeping of the commandments. No doubt it is true that these things belong to our Lord's method; but these are not the things which He puts first, and makes most prominent. Surely an unbiassed study of His words reveals to us that His essential method, the method of salvation which He constantly employs, is a living and personal faith in Himself. This, at all events, was the conviction of Paul; and it was this that helped to make him glory in the Gospel—its method was so gracious.[1]

¶ Often in our own time the Gospel has proved its undiminished power to save. It arrested the gentle and erudite Thomas Bilney of Cambridge when in 1517 he read the Greek Testament of Erasmus. So truly did it win the young scholar for Christ that he became one of the most zealous reformers of England, and one of the first martyrs of the sixteenth century. It was the sublime words of the Gospel truth, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever," entering the stately mind of young Jonathan Edwards, that turned him from darkness to light, and from sin to the service of God. It was the same power of God, which through the faithful labours of Dr. Moffat in South Africa, civilized and saved the savage outlaw African, changing the daring ruffian into a gentle and child-like follower of Christ, even to the close of his life.[2]

5. And it is the power of God to *every one* that believeth. It is at once a very broad and a very narrow Gospel. It knows no natural or social distinction between man and man. It declares that "there is no distinction." What we regard as differences between one man and another are mere surface differences. Morally, all belong to the same category, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This Gospel is broad, like the heart of God. "To every one that believeth." But it is narrow also. It is to those that believe, to those alone. We must attend

[1] J. C. Lambert. [2] J. Little.

to its word. We must feel the need of its healing. We must yearn for its touch. Knowing it is of God, we must trust in its mercy. That is the narrowness of the Gospel. It is the *power of God*, but it cannot save us apart from our moral consciousness, our repentance, our desire, our consent. Our heart must respond to the tender breathing love of God.

¶ That Paul knew well what work this Gospel had to do in the world is evident from this chapter—a chapter that cannot be read in public. The appalling meaning of sin both for the body and for the mind is expressed in three phrases: "God gave them up unto uncleanness"; "God gave them up unto vile affections"; "God gave them up to a reprobate mind." Whatever you may think or say about Paul's theology, profound thinker as he was, his knowledge of human life was not academic. He held by a theory of sin which, as Mr. Gilbert Chesterton says, "accounts for Whitechapel," and accounted for an ancient Rome that was far worse than any modern London. He toned nothing down. He faced the grim facts of life like a wise and skilful surgeon who must track a loathsome disease down to its malignant roots. Paul speaks here of men "who refused to have God in their knowledge," whose lives were—note the awful phrase—"hateful to God."[1]

¶ "I am not ashamed of the gospel"—that is easily said by a man who has received it as a decent tradition, and has never tried to do anything with it; but when people are in earnest about their faith and their duty they are much more likely to confess that sometimes they have been ashamed. It is easy to say, "Of course, Christ can save any man"; but when you have realized the desperate conditions of a single family or a single individual, and go to better these conditions by some Christian influence, you may well have visitings of doubt: I wonder if many of us, with a real will to help, could walk along the Cowgate on a Saturday night, and watch the people without some inward disquiet:—women whose features have been marred by the blows of husband and lover, and marred more sadly by a life of riot and idleness; men who have grown grey without the discipline of settled labour, and without the ministry of purifying thought, the bondsmen of our society for whom the pleasures and the interests and the teachings which are most to us have no existence; lads clustering idly at the corners, with bad secrets passing round, waiting for the vice or the crime which will catch them down to a lower depth. You believe that Christ can save all; but if you were asked to speak of Christ to these, the

[1] C. S. Horne.

difficulties in them and in yourself would gather up before you, and if you began it would be with a burdened feeling that nothing great would come of it. Habit and circumstance are strong, and the wood, it seems, is too rotten to hold the nail. That is the test which searches men, and it was in presence of this test that Paul said, I am not ashamed. Knowing all the disadvantage and the unlikelihood, he believed that Jesus Christ could make the balance even.[1]

Can peach renew lost bloom,
Or violet lost perfume,
Or sullied snow turn white as overnight?
Man cannot compass it, yet never fear:
The leper Naaman
Shows what God will and can.
God who worked there is working here;
Wherefore let shame, not gloom, betinge thy brow.
God who worked then is working now.[2]

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Some of God's Ministries*, 180.
[2] Christina G. Rossetti.

JUSTIFICATION.

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JUSTIFICATION.

For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.—Rom. iii. 23, 24.

1. WHAT is the position of a sinning moral being under the government of God? It is that of guilt, which means that he both deserves and is liable to punishment. It is also that of depravity, or the polluting influence of his sin upon his own soul. The way of relief from the first of these difficulties is through the atonement of Christ. The method of relief from the second is through the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

2. The object of the text is to explain the method of gaining relief from that element of guilt which involves liability to punishment. The question is, how shall the iron link between sin and penalty be broken and the transgressor be allowed to escape? But this is not all. Not only is it necessary that the connection between sin and penalty should be broken; but also that the connection between obedience and reward should be re-established. A real salvation involves not only release from penalty, but a title to life. Unless this title to life can be achieved, conscience cannot be quieted, nor can any reliable hope of future well-being be kindled in the heart. To accomplish both these ends, the sinner must be justified in the full sense of that term; and the most important inquiry which can be raised by the mind of man is, "How can man be just with God?"

3. Manifestly man cannot justify himself. He cannot satisfy the penalty and yet live. He can satisfy it by enduring it; but that is a supposition which implies his ruin, and his salvation on that contingency is self-contradictory and impossible; he cannot

be saved and at the same time lost. He cannot fulfil the law; for his sin has so corrupted his moral nature that all the acts which flow from it are tainted, and he is unable to render that perfect obedience which the law demands, and which alone can carry its rewards. How, then, shall a transgressor of the law be justified?

4. The Gospel gives the answer to the question in the words of the text, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Since man cannot effect his own justification, if accomplished at all it must be done for him by some one else. The Gospel answers the great question by the doctrine of a substitute for the hopeless transgressor, undertaking to do for him what it was impossible for him to do for himself; and the development of that wonderful conception constitutes the essence and the chief distinction of the Christian religion. The development of the grand thought of a substitute for the sinner embraces all the distinctive doctrines of Christianity: justification by faith, atonement, redemption, imputation, the divinity of the Redeemer, the infinitude of the Divine grace, and the absolute effectiveness of the work done for the deliverance of the transgressors of the Divine law.

The subject is Justification. The text contains—

I. The Need of Justification—"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

i. Sin.

ii. All have sinned.

iii. Short of the Glory of God.

II. The Manner of Justification—"Being justified freely by his grace."

i. Justification.

ii. Of God's Free Grace.

III. The Means of Justification—"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

i. Redemption.

ii. The Redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

I.

The Need of Justification.

"All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

i. Sin.

1. We are constantly being haunted by something we have done or have not done, because we have done it or have not done it. And this is not a characteristic of one man or another, but of all men. There are vast differences between men, ranging from the heights of sainthood to the depths of depravity, but there is this feature common to all—a sense that there is a gap between what they are and what they ought to be. There are men who are "given over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness"; and there are men so good that they make others feel as though they belonged to a better world; but if you could look into their hearts and listen to their confession, you would find that the best as well as the worst are conscious of this gap, this dislocation, this contrast between "ought" and "is." There is none that doeth good, no, not one; we have all "gone out of the way," *i.e.* the way of perfect, ideal goodness.

2. There are two ways of explaining this strange but universal fact in human life; and there is a third way which more or less combines the two.

(1) The first way is that which till recently was universal among Christian thinkers—that man is a being who was created not only innocent, but in a sense perfect, and that he has dropped into a lower condition which is untrue to his real nature, and which shows itself by this feeling of remorse or sorrow for what he is. Man, in other words, is a fallen creature.

(2) The second way of accounting for the fact of sin is quite a recent one, but it is held by probably the majority of thinking people now. That theory tells us that man is not a fallen being, who began his career in a better or perfect state, but one who has climbed up from a lower stage by a process of evolution. In this respect, he is not different from other creatures, who have all climbed up from some lower form of life to their

present position. But he is different from all other creatures in this, that in virtue of a God-given gift, he is not the mere creature of heredity and circumstances, but has a certain power to assist or retard his own further development in every sense. He is a creature not made, but in the making; and he has been taken into partnership by his Creator, so that he can help God (or hinder Him) in the work of perfecting his own nature. In other words, there is a lower nature in him derived from his animal origin, strong and vital and full of passionate desires. There is a higher nature in him, which is weak and frail and undeveloped, but of infinite worth. There is thus a conflict ever going on within him between the lower nature and the higher, and because he is within limits free to choose between this and that, he is able to help on or to hinder his higher true self from gaining the victory over his lower.

(3) Now man is certainly a creature in process of development. He is advancing in a hundred directions; and the impulse to advance is so powerful that, though it acts fitfully and is often checked and thrown back, it never really ceases to act; so that when humanity goes back in one direction it tends to recover itself, and to realize in one way what it fails to realize in another. None the less certain is it that there is something more the matter with human nature as it is than a feeling of not having progressed fast enough. The human conscience testifies to a feeling of some moral disaster or calamity that has fallen upon it. It is haunted by a stronger feeling than that of failure to attain. Some poison has mingled with the very blood of the soul, so to speak. We come into the world weighted not only with our animal nature, but with a paralysis or sickness in our higher nature itself. We cannot call our animal desires wrong; they are healthy and good in themselves; they conduce to the continuance and vigour of our being; we cannot dispense with them. The mischief does not seem to be there, but higher up, in the will itself. Now no mere evolutionary theory can account for this fact of our nature; and it is this which the old theory of the Fall attempts to account for, and which, when broadly conceived, it does account for. At some distant period of our history as a race—perhaps at the very

beginning—a wrong turn was taken, and its consequences, passed on through the mysterious law of heredity, continue to this day. Man is a rising creature, with a principle of betterment deeply implanted within his nature which has never been quite uprooted; but he is also a fallen creature, whose nature has been thrown out of gear through the effects of habitual sin, which has largely paralysed the power to rise. And so man is a distracted, struggling, tormented creature, dragged in different ways, unable on the one side to sink contentedly into evil, and to forget God and goodness in that evil, and yet on the other unable to shake off the incubus and burden of this sinful nature, which clings to him in spite of all his endeavours to free himself from it, and makes him cry out, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

¶ Any theory or teaching which in any way blurs the meaning of sin as an awful and devastating mischief, for which there can be no excuse, seems to me to cut at the very root and nerve-centre of the spiritual life. Sin is the one (and perhaps the only) thing in the universe which it is impossible to justify; it is by definition the thing that ought not to be. Once we begin to whittle away its meaning, and make it a stage in progress, a fall upward, a necessary or inevitable episode in the experience of an evolving creature, we empty it of its distinctive meaning, and strike at the very heart of every genuine moral effort. I can see that physical evil —*i.e.* suffering and calamity and limitation and loss—has many helpful functions to fulfil; but moral evil—sin—is the one thing that has no function to fulfil; it is a purely destructive, disintegrating force, an essential blight, a backward, downward, stumble of the soul; it ought not to be, or ever to have come into being, at any time in the life of any creature of God's making.[1]

¶ The fact that the only perfect being, the only typical man whom the world has ever seen, was made *perfect through suffering, yet without sin*, shows how essentially different the problems of suffering and sin are, inextricably as they are interwoven in human experience. Suffering is one of the needful conditions of our physical life, preserving us from danger, stimulating us into a larger life in virtue of our efforts to overcome it, and sweetening our proud and self-indulgent nature by its discipline. But sin is the mortal enemy of our highest, our spiritual life; and as such

[1] E. Griffith-Jones.

alone are we justified in dealing with it. That is the Christian view from the beginning; and it is the only view that can safeguard the soul in its perilous journey through this world.[1]

ii. All have sinned.

1. From the first man that breathed in Eden to the last man that will look on the sun, we are one family, under the rule and protection of one Providence, borne down by the same burden and looking for the same "better land." We are a living and unbroken unity—past, present, and to be. We are all conscious of the same bias to wrong-doing. We are all sinners. "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." It is not simply that our nature bears an inherited taint and fault, called "original sin"; but we have yielded ourselves to voluntary sinfulness. Our last condemnation comes not from our inheritance of original infirmity, but from that "personal estate" of sins we have wilfully committed. It is the presence of the individual will in sin that renders it an object of punishment. "All have sinned."

¶ The Apostle does not assert that there are not degrees of wickedness and lower depths of guilt; he only declares, with uncompromising assurance, that all have come short of the standard. It is one thing for human nature to possess some beautiful remainders of good; it is another question whether human nature, even at its best, has enough good to save and restore itself. A famous temple of Rome, or of Greece, or of India, lying in ruins, may have fragments of splendid sculpture buried among the rubbish; but the splendid fragments cannot build once more the splendid temple. A young woman on her death-bed may have a face as lovely as a poet's fancy, with

> The gleam
> Of far-off summers in her tresses bright.

She is dying, nevertheless! The sinful heart may have tender passions and noble impulses; but they are only soiled fragments—beautiful things hiding the horror of death.[2]

[1] R. Griffith-Jones. [2] H. E. Lewis.

2. But how does St. Paul prove it? You will see the answer in the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. He proves it, not speculatively, but historically; not by logic, but by experience; not by development of a theory, but by an appeal to fact. Mankind in his days was divided into two great sections —Jews and Gentiles—with no consciousness as yet that the middle wall of partition which separated them from each other had been finally broken down. Each section hated, each despised, the other. The Jew despised the Gentile as a shameful reprobate; the Gentile hated the Jew as a grovelling impostor. But neither realized his true condition; neither was at all awake to the fact that he had sinned.

(1) Certainly the Gentiles were not. Paul begins with them. They were, as a class, dead to all sense of sin; they were in that meridian of evil which St. Paul calls "past feeling." A stage there may have been in the national as in the individual life, in which they felt their guiltiness; early in their career, before the love of innocence was dead, before the tenderness of conscience was seared; and later, too, the stage came to them, as it comes to all, when "the Furies took their seats upon the midnight pillow." But from the soul of their youth the sense of wounded innocence was too often swept away like the dew from the green grass; and from the social life it vanished in universal corruption. The life of Greece, for which some writers sigh as having been so infinite in fascination, was bright, no doubt, in its first gaiety, in its ideal freshness. But when youth was gone; when strength failed; when health was shattered; when on the dead flowers of life age shed its snows; when Death came nearer and nearer with the dull monotony of his echoing footfall, and they saw no life beyond—life in Hellas was not gay then. Take her at her most brilliant period, when her most immortal temples were built, her most immortal songs written, her most immortal statues carved, and we see the seamy side and ragged edges of the life of Greece revealed in the sensual wickedness of Aristophanes; we see its fierce, untamed, soul-rending passions recorded in the stern pages of Thucydides. Her own poets, her own satirists, her own historians will teach us that to have been naked and not ashamed was to have been expelled from Paradise; to be past feeling for sin was to be removed

utterly from even the possibility of blessedness. And as for the Romans—

> On that hard Pagan world disgust
> And secret loathing fell;
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell.

(2) Nor was the Jew. So far from feeling himself sinful, he looked on himself alone as being the just, the upright, the chosen. He spoke with contemptuous disgust of the Gentiles as sinners and dogs and swine. Of course, in a vague general way, he assented to vague general confessions, as when the High Priest laid his hands on the head of the scapegoat, and said, "O God, the God of Israel, pardon our iniquities, our transgressions, and our sins." But, on the whole, in the Pharisaic epoch, which began even in the days of Ezra, the Jews were infinitely satisfied with themselves. They held (as the Talmud often shows us) that no Jew could possibly be rejected; that God looked on him with absolute favouritism; that the meanest son of Israel was a prince of the kings of the earth. The pride which caused this serene unconsciousness of their own guilt—the fact that they so little recognized the plague of their own hearts, was the worst thing about them. They knew not that they were miserable, poor, blind, and naked. It was the self-induced callosity of formalism. It was the penal blindness of moral self-conceit. "Are we blind also?" asked the astonished Pharisees of Christ. And He said unto them, "If ye were blind ye would have no sin; but now you say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." The fact, then, that Jew and Gentile alike were ignorant of their own guilty condition was the deadliest element of their danger. For

> When we in our viciousness grow hard—
> O misery on't!—the wise gods seel our eyes;
> In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
> Adore our errors; laugh at's while we strut
> To our confusion.

¶ It seems to me that people get into the way of identifying sin with one kind of sin—the sin of the outcasts—and forget the sins of *character*, of the Pharisees, and of the wicked, wise conspirators against human good and happiness, who are

eminently the Bible type of the sinners who have everything to fear.[1]

> A soul made weak by its pathetic want
> Of just the first apprenticeship to sin
> Which thenceforth makes the sinning soul secure
> From all foes save itself, souls' truliest foe,—
> Since egg turned snake needs fear no serpentry.[2]

3. The Apostle proves that all have sinned by pointing to the facts around him. The facts of experience prove it still. Take the irreligious world—the vast masses who do not even profess religion, who never set foot in a place of worship. Take the vast army of unhappy drunkards, reeling through a miserable life to a dishonoured grave. Take the countless victims of sins of impurity. Take trade and commerce, with its adulterations, its dishonesties, its reckless greed, its internecine struggles between capital and toil. Are these mere words, or are they indisputable facts? Is there no gambling? Are there no wild, greedy, dishonest speculations? Is the common conversation of men what it should be? Is the drink trade and its consequences an honour to us? Does God look with approval on the opium traffic? Are the amusements of the nation satisfactory? Can we regard with complacency the accessories of the turf? Are the streets of London—reeking as they do with open and shameless temptation—what the streets of a Christian capital should be? Would a Paul or an Elijah have had no burning words of scathing denunciation at what the stage and the opera sometimes offer to the rich, and the music-hall and the dancing-room to the poor? How many of the rich understand what it is to be generous? How many of the poor are alive to the duty and dignity of self-respect? Are there no base and godless newspapers? Did not a great statesman write but recently about "one of the thousands of lies, invented by knaves and believed by fools"? Is the general tone of what is called society healthy—with its gossip, and its fashion, and its luxury, and its selfish acquiescence in the seething misery around?

¶ It may seem somewhat extreme, which I will speak; therefore let every man judge of it, even as his own heart shall tell

[1] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 265.
[2] R. Browning, *The Ring and the Book*.

him, and no otherwise; I will but only make a demand: If God should yield to us, not as unto Abraham, if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, yea, or if ten good persons could be found in a city, for their sakes that city should not be destroyed; but, if God should make us an offer thus large, Search all the generations of men since the fall of your father Adam, find one man that hath done any one action, which hath past from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all; and for that one man's one only action, neither man nor angel shall feel the torments which are prepared for both: do you think that this ransom, to deliver men and angels, would be found among the sons of men?[1]

¶ I shall be reminded what a tragedy of misconception and misconduct man at large presents: of organized injustice, cowardly violence, and treacherous crime; and of the damning imperfections of the best. They cannot be too darkly drawn. Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right. But where the best consistently miscarry, how tenfold more remarkable that all should continue to strive; and surely we should find it both touching and inspiriting, that in a field from which success is banished, our race should not cease to labour.[2]

4. The sense of sin, which in previous generations was so acute and full of torment, seems to have recently lost a good deal of its edge and insistence. Men are not troubled as they used to be with a sense of the awful reality and devastating nature of the evil in their hearts. And there are teachers who defend this attitude. Sir Oliver Lodge, for instance, has said, in one of his many recent excursions into the realm of theology, that the man in the street does not trouble himself much about his sins nowadays; and he seems to justify this change of front. Another leading thinker has even more boldly said in effect that sin is only a mistaken and misleading search—as it were, in the wrong direction—for the larger life, *i.e.* for God; or in other words, that it is only an attempt to realize one's possibilities on the wrong plane of effort and experience. This has shocked many people because of the blunt and vivid way it was put, and well it may. None the less it expresses the unspoken idea of a great many thinkers. The old Puritan attitude of fear and shame and sorrow at the thought of evil, the conviction that it is an offence in the sight of God, at which He is infinitely pained in His heart, and which rouses His loving but awful indignation—this has given

[1] Hooker, *Works*, iii. 493. [2] R. L. Stevenson, *Pulvis et Umbra*.

way to the notion that sin, after all, is only an incident of development, that it is one of the necessary conditions of ethical progress, and that, this being so, God cannot be angry with us if we go wrong on our way towards getting into the right road. This attitude is combined with a theory that, since God is omnipotent, He will see to it that in the end every sinner is somehow or other brought back to Himself. Men who sin may be going out of their way to find Him, but find Him they will in the end and at last. Otherwise God can never be all in all.

¶ As a matter of fact, the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all; . . . his mission, if he is good for anything, "is to be up and doing."[1]

¶ Said a woman to me last week: "I cannot feel that my heart is desperately wicked; have I to?"[2]

¶ I knew a man once who lived a scandalously immoral life, and when he tired of it committed suicide quite deliberately. He left behind him—for he was a man of letters—a copy of verses addressed to his Father in heaven, in which he told Him that he was coming home to dwell with Him for ever. That was an extreme instance perhaps; but extreme only because this man, being well-educated and accustomed to express his thoughts in verse, was moved to put on record his absolute lack of any sense of sin.[3]

5. A misconception as to the real nature of sin, and what it consists in, is one reason why many have little or no consciousness of it; why they are not quickened to repentance and confession; why we hear so often such statements as these, "I am no worse than others," "I have never committed any crime," "I do not feel that I am a miserable sinner"; or the proud thanksgiving of the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are." In all such cases God's standard of requirement is fatally misunderstood; the length and breadth of His law are not discerned; the love and purpose of His heart are most inadequately conceived. Once let the light of heaven shine out in all its native brightness, and the darkness of earth will be revealed in striking contrast. He who has felt the love of God, and has recognized Him as a Father, must have felt also the baseness and guilt of sin—must, ere long, have said, like the Prodigal, "I will arise and go to my

[1] Sir Oliver Lodge, in *Hibbert Journal*, April 1904, 466.
[2] T. R. Williams. [3] R. Winterbotham.

father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

¶ I have never yet met the man who disputed the fact of his being a sinner; but I have met with many who admitted it, and yet lived on in the world as gaily as if it entailed no further consequences. When I proceed to inquire how this can possibly be, it always strikes me, as the chief reason, that men do not give themselves leisure—to *reflect*. All around me appear to labour under an indescribable distraction of mind. I cannot otherwise account for the decided manner in which they admit many propositions, and yet do not draw from them the *conclusions* that are obviously manifest. Since the hour in which I first clearly apprehended the one truth that *I am a sinner—against God*, I likewise perceived, as clearly, that there is no business in life so important as to *recover His favour*, and become His obedient child. Before that discovery, it always seemed to me as if my life had no proper aim. It was then, for the first time, that I became aware for what purpose I was living. No doubt I had a certain object, even before, but it was one of which I felt ashamed, and therefore did not acknowledge even to myself. It was, in truth, to enjoy the things of this world, and to be honoured in the eyes of men. And to thousands at my side, although they too are ashamed to confess it, this is the sole wreath for which they strive. If, however, they would take *time to reflect*, the mere perceptions of the understanding would show them the folly of their conduct. For, supposing our joys and hopes to have their centre in this world, what a painful thought that we are every day withdrawing further away from it! whereas, if eternity be our end and aim, how pleasing to think that to it we are every day advancing nearer![1]

iii. St. Paul's Definition of Sin.

"All have sinned," says St. Paul, "and *fall short of the glory of God*." That seems to be his conception of sin. That is sin in its essence. And that includes all under sin, leaving no room whatever for exculpation or escape. For what is it to fall short of the glory of God?

1. The word "glory" (*doxa*) is used in the New Testament with two distinct meanings. It means (1) reputation, or (2) brightness, especially the brightness or splendour which radiates from the

[1] A. Tholuck.

presence of God. The second must be the meaning here. It is the majesty or goodness of God as manifested to men.

¶ The Rabbis held that Adam by the Fall lost six things, "the glory, life (immortality), his stature (which was above that of his descendants), the fruit of the field, the fruits of trees, and the light (by which the world was created, and which was withdrawn from it and reserved for the righteous in the world to come)." It is explained that "the glory" was a reflection from the Divine glory which before the Fall brightened Adam's face (Weber, *Altsyn. Theol.*, p. 214). Clearly St. Paul conceives of this glory as in process of being recovered: the physical sense is also enriched by its extension to attributes that are moral and spiritual.[1]

2. What is to "fall short" of this glory?

(1) The metaphor is taken from the racecourse. To "come short" is to be left behind in the race, not to reach the goal. And the goal is "the glory of God." We may take "the glory of God," then, in the first place, in the widest sense. To attain to "the glory of God" is (*a*) to enjoy His favour, (*b*) to be formed in His image, (*c*) to live in His presence. These three together cover all that the soul of man can desire. They are the sum total of happiness. There is nothing beyond. Adam had them all in Eden before his fall. He was made in the image of God, and he enjoyed the favour and the presence of God. Sin robbed him of them all. And as sinners we by nature come short of them all. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 7, 8). Surely this is the opposite of God's favour! Then, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (Rom. viii. 5). Remember what the "works of the flesh" are, as St. Paul gives them in Gal. v. 19–21. Surely this is the opposite of the image of God! And then, "Without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). Surely this is the opposite of God's presence!

(2) But, in the second place, we may take this definition of sin to mean that men have not lived for the glory of God. This goes deeper than acts; it reaches the motive of human action. We, who can read only what speaks to the outward senses, very naturally think most of words and actions, because they are all of

[1] Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 85.

which we can be certainly cognizant. And, as naturally, that great Spirit who reads thoughts as easily as He reads words, will look equally, nay, more than equally, at the inward principles, at the springs more than at the acts of the machine of life—at the sources more than at the streams of every man's moral being. For here lies the difference—we generally think feelings important because they lead to conduct; God lays stress upon conduct because it indicates feelings. So it will be at the last great account. All the deeds and sayings of a man will then stand forth in the light—each one in its clearness. But to what purpose? That the man may be judged of those things? Certainly not. But they are witnesses, called up to give evidence before men and angels, to a certain inward invisible state of the man, by which, and according to which, every one will receive his sentence and his eternal award. The real subject-matter of inquiry in that day will not be actions, nor words, but motives.

(3) And, in the third place, the expression, "Fall short of the glory of God," may mean—and probably in the Apostle's mind did mean—failure to reach the *moral* glory of God, the inexorable perfectness of His character, with which we must correspond in order to be at peace with Him.

¶ Let us understand well the greatness of the Divine requirement from man, for it is the measure of the Divine love. The love of God can be satisfied with nothing less than its own perfection. It is to this that He seeks to bring us. Anything less than this, any coming short of His glory, is, in His sight, sin; a missing of our true human aim; a failure to reach the stature of the perfect man—to be complete in Christ Jesus, to be washed in His blood, to be clothed with His righteousness, to be filled with His spirit.[1]

¶ The perfect revelation of that glory is in Jesus Christ, who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." In Him, the image of God, men were originally created; in Him they live and move and have their being. That same Divine Word and Son is the life and light of men, "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." So in this way we reach a true harmony between the declaration of St. Paul in the text, that a coming short of the glory of God is the universal human sin, and the witness of the Holy Spirit, who, as expressly foretold by our blessed Lord, ever since His descent

[1] J. N. Bennie.

on the Day of Pentecost, has been convincing the world of sin, because men believe not in Christ.[1]

3. Notice, then, that in this statement that "all have sinned," St. Paul is not charging every man with the commission of crime, or of open acts of wickedness such as the world condemns and the laws of men punish. But he declares that all, without exception, have missed the true aim of their being; have fallen short of the mark which they ought to have hit; have failed wilfully in attaining the end of their life. They have not entered into and fulfilled the purpose of God; they have not answered His gracious call; they have not gone forth to meet Him, or yielded themselves to the patient drawing of His love.

¶ It is a commonplace feeling, if not an actual belief, that if men have not done any great harm they cannot be exposed to any great condemnation. But what is great harm? Is it not missing the very object you were made for? A rifle is made to shoot straight; if it will not do so, however perfect the polish of its barrel, or the finish of its lock or stock, it is useless, and you throw it on one side or break it up. The more complete it seems to your eye in all its workmanship, the more vexed you are with it for its utter failure in the one work for which you had it made.[2]

"Lift up your hearts." "We lift them up." Ah me!
I cannot, Lord, lift up my heart to Thee;
Stoop, lift it up, that where Thou art I too may be.

"Give Me thy heart." I would not say Thee nay,
But have no power to keep or give away
My heart: stoop, Lord, and take it to Thyself to-day.

Stoop, Lord, as once before, now once anew;
Stoop, Lord, and hearken, hearken, Lord, and do,
And take my will, and take my heart, and take me too.[3]

II.

The Manner of our Justification.

"Being justified freely by His grace."

The statement brings us face to face with that word, Justification, which played so great a part in Reformation history, and

[1] J. N. Bennie. [2] F. Morse. [3] Christina G. Rossetti.

which undoubtedly had so rich a content to minds like St. Paul's, but which has tended more and more to disappear out of our religious vocabulary. As for the word, that is a small affair; but it would argue a serious loss in spiritual sensitiveness if we could endure to exist as children of God on any other terms than those implied in the old phrase—justification.

i. Justification.

1. Paul's doctrine of justification may be summed up in three propositions: (1) God reckons, or pronounces, or treats as righteous the ungodly who has no righteousness of his own to show (Rom. iv. 5). (2) It is his faith that is reckoned for righteousness; faith in Christ is accepted instead of personal merit gained by good works (iv. 5). (3) This faith has Christ as its object (iii. 22), especially the propitiation which is in His blood (iii. 25); but as such it results in a union with Christ so close that Christ's experience of separation from sin and surrender to God is reproduced in the believer (vi. 1–11).

2. The use of the term "justification" in perpetual contrast with the term "condemnation," settles the question that justification is a forensic or judicial term, carrying the notion which is in direct contrast with the notion of condemnation. "They shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked" (Deut. xxv. 1). "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xvii. 15). "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33). The last is St. Paul, who also declares that "the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification" (Rom. v. 16). These terms are so clearly opposed that the meaning of the one may be determined by the other. Condemnation is a legal term expressive of a certain relation to law; it confers no personal or subjective depraving influence on the character of the condemned person. It simply declares that the law, or contract, has been violated, and formally decrees the subjection of the law-breaker to the penalties of the law, but exerts no corrupting influence on his personal character. Justification, then, can only do the same thing in the opposite direction; it determines a legal standing

without exerting a personal subjective influence on the character of the justified person, making him personally holy. This personal improvement which will inevitably follow justification as one of its effects is due to sanctification; but it is not a part of justification itself. It is not allowable to confound cause and effect.

3. The doctrine has been denounced as legalistic and even immoral. What has to be carefully remembered is that Paul is not responsible for what a theological scholasticism or a popular evangelicalism may have made of his doctrine. God does not impute righteousness to the unrighteous, but He accepts instead of righteousness, instead of a perfect fulfilment of the whole law, faith. "Faith is reckoned for righteousness." In forgiving, God's intention is not to allow a man to feel comfortable and happy while indifferent to, and indolent in, goodness; but to give a man a fresh opportunity, a new ability to become holy and godly. Those whom God reckons righteous, He means also to make righteous; and the gradual process of sanctification can only begin with the initial act of justification. A man must be relieved of the burden of his guilt, he must be recalled from the estrangement of his sin, he must be allowed to escape from the haunting shadows of his doom, before he can with any confidence, courage, or constancy tread the upward path of goodness to God. The man who accepts God's forgiveness in faith cannot mean to abuse it by continuance in sin, but must long for and welcome it as allowing him to make a fresh start on the new path of trustful, loyal, and devoted surrender to God. Paul, it is quite certain, knew of no saving faith that could claim justification but disown sanctification. To him faith was not only assent to what Christ had by His sacrifice done for man's salvation, but consent, constant and complete, to all that Christ by His Spirit might do in transforming character. He knew of no purpose of grace that stopped short at reckoning men righteous, and did not go on to making them righteous.[1]

¶ Your little child does the wrong thing or says the false thing. Then comes sorrow, let us hope, and the resolve to do better, and the old question, "Am I good now?" And you, sitting there half glad, half fearful, know that the fault is not conquered yet, that the consequence of that slip, that fall, remains, a scar if not a wound; but you recognize, too, that the aspiration

[1] A. E. Garvie.

is genuinely for the right, the face set towards victory. It is not righteousness achieved, but you count the faith, the attitude of soul, for righteousness. You say, "Yes, you are good now." The declaration is of goodness unrealized as yet; but, nevertheless, actual to the heart of grace, in hope and resolve. And with the declaration the shadow vanishes, and that confidence is restored in which lies, perhaps, the child's chief hope of achieving the goodness.[1]

¶ When Robert Browning sings—

'Tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man
Would do,

it may have a perilous sound. But by and by we discover that it is a profoundly true interpretation of life. It is the will outreaching towards a perfection unattained, and, perhaps, even unattainable here. It is the exaltation of the inward life; the motion of the soul towards the highest that it knows and sees. This faith counts as righteousness in the sight of God.

All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God.

He counted what we would fain be, but were not, unto us for righteousness. There is a book of which some of us are fond which describes the resolution of an old, old maid to adventure to Central Africa to preach to the heathen. Of course, the thing was impossible; and, of course, at last, with many tears, she discovered that she would never go. In human reckoning I suppose the will, the faith, the consecration of spirit, count for nothing. Certainly she did not go. There was no actual achievement of the heroism proposed. But I believe, with Browning, that this was her exaltation; and all she could never be she was worth to God; and that the willed deed was reckoned in His sight as a deed done. This is the point at which even the law of God is transcended by His free, matchless grace.

See the king—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect.[2]

[1] C. S. Horne. [2] Browning, *Saul*.

4. Justification is not simply pardon, and it is not sanctification.

(1) It is not *Pardon.* There is something more than forgiveness here. Your little child who has done wrong pleads with you, "Am I good now?" "Yes," you say; but the shadow has not passed from your face. And the child knows that all is not right. "Am I good now?" "Yes." "Then why don't you smile?" Exactly. You must get back to the old footing. Say what you like, even the sweetest tones of forgiveness do not always remove the impression of a shadow across the face of God. The old familiarity and confidence are gone. Whatever be the precise theological content of justification we all know what we mean, what we feel we want—the cloud off the sun, the doubt off the heart, the uneasy apprehension dispelled. We want to be at home again, and walk once more as children of the light. *That* is justification.[1]

¶ It is unquestionably true that the real salvation of a breaker of the Divine law involves not merely an escape from the penalty of the law, but a title to its reward. He needs something that will carry not only deliverance from danger, but a security for happiness.[2]

(2) It is not *Sanctification.* The different relations to it on our part are (*a*) that righteousness apprehended and appropriated to ourselves by faith, in all its completeness; upon which God accepts and treats us as actually possessing it; this is what is meant by our justification, or our status of present peace and fellowship with God; and (*b*) that righteousness, which is Jesus Christ Himself, through the constant association and participation of faith with Him, gradually but actually imparting Himself to us so as to become to us not only a righteousness in which we believe, but one which at least we begin to possess; this is what in process or progress we call our sanctification, and when it is completed it will be our glory or glorification.

ii. Gratis and Gracious.

"Being justified freely (as a gift, gratis) by his grace." The sinner is justified as an act of God's free grace. The act itself is the act of God in His judicial capacity, and includes in it the

[1] C. S. Horne. [2] C. R. Vaughan.

blotting out, the forgiving of all original and actual transgression. All is blotted out. There is not one sin left unremitted. There is a complete obliterating of all evidence of guilt against the sinner. And this act is done freely, graciously.

1. It is free on the part of God *in the eternal purpose of it.* For He might justly have left men to perish under the guilt of sin.

2. It is free in the means He used to effect it, *in the sending of His Son.* He was the free gift of His eternally free love. Nothing could have induced Him to this but His own free grace. "He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

3. It is free *in the laying of the punishment of our sins upon Him.* It pleased the Father to bruise Him, to put Him to grief. This could only be an act of grace. Hence, "herein is the love of God manifested, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This was the greatest, the highest proof God could give of His love and grace. Here He went to the utmost in loving—when for our sakes He laid the punishment of sin upon His own dear Son.

4. It is free in the *covenant engagement with Christ for us.* Christ stood for us, in our place and room. That was arranged in covenant. Nothing but free electing grace could account for this. "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." This is all of free grace, and only of free grace. It was according to free grace that He "chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

5. It is free also *in the offer of all this to us in the Gospel.* It is offered without money and without price. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Nothing can be freer or more cordial than this invitation. The poorest is welcome. All are

such; the feast is prepared for the poor. But the most bankrupt sinner finds himself within the folds of this invitation.

6. It is free, finally, *in the actual pardon of them that believe.* They have nothing, absolutely nothing, on the ground of which they can ask for this pardon. They must come absolutely bankrupt, poor and needy, that they may obtain this unspeakable privilege from God. They have made no satisfaction for former transgression. They have no penal or expiatory suffering to merit it. They can have no expectation of future recompense. Whether, then, we consider the pardoner or the pardoned, justification is equally free—on the part of God who justifies, and on the part of the sinner who is justified. They are justified freely by His grace.[1]

Rest over me in love, O piercèd One!
Smile on me sadly through my mist of sin,
Smile on me sweetly from Thy crown of thorns.
As the dawn looketh on the great dark hills,
As the hills dawn-touch'd on the great dark sea,
Dawn on my heart's great darkness, Prince of Peace!

III.

The Means of our Justification.

"Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

1. *Redemption.* The word redemption or ransom is easily understood; it means the buying back, the paying something for another. When a man had incurred a debt, and, in accordance with ancient law, had been imprisoned or sold as a slave in consequence of that debt, the payment of the debt by another constituted his redemption from slavery, his ransom from bondage. All mankind was in that condition before God, and we are in that condition; burdened with the ten thousand talents of debt which we cannot pay; in bondage to sin and Satan; sold under sin, tied and bound with the chain of our sins; our very lives justly forfeited to the majesty of violated law. And from this condition Christ delivered us. As far as the effects to us are concerned, we might say that He purchased us from this slavery, that He bought us by the price of His life and death; redeemed us with His

[1] M. Macaskill.

precious blood. And the figure chiefly used is not that He pays the debt, but that He cancels it; forgives it, freely and unpaid; blots it out, tears it up, nails its no longer valid fragments to His cross.

¶ The Authorized Version does not keep the same English equivalent for the same Greek word, and the words, "reconciliation," "atonement," "propitiation," and "redemption," seem to be used almost indiscriminately in it. But in the Greek they are always kept distinct. We have here the word "redemption," and the Greek word is *ἀπολυτρώσις*. In chap. iii. 25 the word we have is "propitiation," and the Greek word is *ἱλαστήριον*. And we have in chap. v. 11 the word *καταλλαγή*, translated wrongly in the text as "atonement," but rightly in the margin as "reconciliation." Now, it is most important to keep these three things separate, because they are the work of different offices of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Redemption" is the work of the king. "Propitiation" is the work of the priest. And "reconciliation" describes the work of the prophet. And if we want an all-round view of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must combine the three, and then we have Christ's work—the work of the Anointed Prophet, the work of the Anointed Priest, and the work of the Anointed King.[1]

¶ It is simply impossible to get rid of the conception of a ransom from the New Testament. Christian piety should surely be as willing to consider gratefully "all our redemption cost" as to recognize confidently "all our redemption won." We need not press the metaphor of redemption to yield a theory of the atonement; but the idea of Christ's death as a ransom expresses the necessity of that death as the condition of man's salvation, as required not only by the moral order of the world, but also by the holy will of God, which that moral order expresses.[2]

Alas! my Lord is going,
Oh my woe!
It will be mine undoing;
If He go,
I'll run and overtake Him;
If He stay,
I'll cry aloud and make Him
Look this way.
O stay, my Lord, my Love, 'tis I;
Comfort me quickly, or I die.

[1] E. A. Stuart. [2] A. E. Garvie.

"Cheer up thy drooping spirits;
I am here.
Mine all-sufficient merits
Shall appear
Before the throne of glory
In thy stead:
I'll put into thy story
What I did.
Lift up thine eyes, sad soul, and see
Thy Saviour here. Lo, I am He."

Alas! shall I present
My sinfulness
To Thee? Thou wilt resent
The loathsomeness.
"Be not afraid, I'll take
Thy sins on Me,
And all My favour make
To shine on thee."
Lord, what Thou'lt have me, Thou must make me.
"As I have made thee now, I take thee."[1]

2. The Redemption is *in Christ Jesus.* How has He accomplished it? Take the steps in order.

(1) Man, having broken the Divine law, is under condemnation. The Most High appears before us as the moral governor of men, presenting to them His law, with the simple requirement, Obey. Obey and you shall live—"Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth these things shall live by them." Disobey, and you shall die—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But man has transgressed the law, and thus incurred the penalty.

(2) The claims of the law have been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ. He assumed man's nature, was made under the law, and fulfilled all righteousness. "I do always those things which please the Father" was the utterance of His own consciousness; "I find no fault in Him" was the verdict of His foe; "Who did no sin," "Jesus Christ the Righteous," was the witness of those who knew Him best; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" was the declaration of God. In the life of Jesus, the law found its fulfilling and complete embodiment.

[1] Christopher Harvey.

But though our Lord thus fulfilled the law's claim, He suffered its penalty as though He were guilty. His death was not the necessary end of the human life which He assumed. He was wounded for transgression, He was bruised for iniquity, chastisement was upon Him, He made Him to be sin who knew no sin. He was made a curse, "for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," He cried that He was forsaken of God. Christ fulfilled the law perfectly, and yet suffered as though He had broken it wholly.

(3) Christ's twofold nature made His fulfilment of the law imputable. He was *Man*. The law imposed on man must be fulfilled by man; it is not angelic holiness, nor heavenly holiness which is required, but human holiness. The righteousness of the Man, Christ Jesus, was of this kind, wrought out under the same limitations and conditions, and only with the same power as those under which the law was at first laid upon Adam, and by which Adam might have stood. But the Word who was made flesh was *God*. Thus He was under no obligation to the law, He owed it nothing on His own account. Had He been simply man, all His righteousness would have been necessary for His own justification, but He was God, everlastingly and infinitely holy, in and of Himself, and if as such He stooped to obey the law, and work out a human righteousness, He needed not that for Himself, He was righteous already, *it was a righteousness extra and to spare*, and the very righteousness man needs. And so of the Penalty which He paid. Since He was man, that penalty was inflicted on man's nature, but since He kept the law, no penalty was due from Him; like His righteousness, it was something extra and to spare. But He was also God, which gives His sufferings an infinite value, and makes them constitute a price paid, a curse endured for transgression, as great as God is great. Here, then, we see in Christ a perfect obedience to the law, and the law's penalty completely endured, and both by human nature, and the point is—Christ does not need them for Himself, He has them both to spare.

(4) God declares that He imputes the fulfilment of the law's claims by Christ to those who accept Him as their representative. That is to say, these things which Christ has to spare are handed over to such, and regarded by God as on their behalf. That is the act of Justification by faith, the acceptance of Christ as our repre-

sentative, His righteousness reckoned to us, our penalty paid in Him, God declaring that He accepts this Substitution in the case of all those who thus trust His Son. "Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."[1]

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
If I lack'd anything.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here:"
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee."
Love took my hand, and smiling, did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.[2]

[1] C. New

[2] Christopher Harvey.

The Harvest of the Justified.

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The Harvest of the Justified.

Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—Rom. v. 1, 2.

1. The Epistle to the Romans is the first treatise in Christian theology, and the mother of all others. But it is very far from being merely a theological treatise. Its spirit is not scholastic, but experimental, and the problems it deals with are not mere men of straw, but vital to the religious life of him who wrote it, and of those for whom it was first written. This may seem, perhaps, to make it less relevant to the needs of men to-day, and it is quite true that we cannot but be daunted by the obscurity of many of its references, and by the unfamiliar form in which its teaching is cast. But, for all that, we may easily discover that the questions it deals with, under Jewish form, are live questions still, and have an intimate bearing on the spiritual experience of Christians to-day. This is notably the case with the great subject of justification—the central theme at once of this Epistle and the whole Pauline theology. Paul's insight into human nature was never more clearly shown than when he fixed upon this as the very centre of man's needs in relation to God. And the question as to how a man can be justified before God is still *the* question on which religious men need to think clearly and believe strongly if they would attain that peace which the world cannot give.

2. The text mentions two things which follow upon justification. These two things are *Peace* and *Glory*. The one is present, the other future. The one is to be realized as the immediate result of our justification; the other is to be looked forward to as its consummation. Both are sure. Yet both have to be *made* sure. For we are always responsible for the exercise of faith, that channel along which these and all other gifts of Christ are sent to

us. Let us therefore, being justified by faith, have peace with God and keep it; and let us exult in the sure hope of future glory. Perhaps the clearest way of explaining the text will be to take its clauses separately and in their own order.

I.

Justified by Faith.

"Being therefore justified by faith."

i. Therefore.

1. The Apostle Paul has been called "the great *ergoist*," because the word "therefore" is of such frequent occurrence in his writings. It is one of the keynotes of his Epistles, as "verily" is of the preaching of Christ. The difference is significant. "Therefore" is the word of argument; while "verily" is the word of authority. Here the word "therefore" refers to the whole argument, begun at iii. 31 and ended at iv. 25, but especially to the statement of iv. 25 itself: "Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification." Christ's death and resurrection have not been in vain: there are those who have actually been justified in consequence. Let us therefore have peace with God.

2. It is an argument from experience. It is very interesting to observe this prominent use in the reasoning of the Apostle Paul of what we have learned to call "the argument from experience." Some appear to fancy this argument one of the greatest discoveries of the nineteenth century; others look upon it with suspicion as if its use were an innovation of dangerous tendency. No doubt, like other forms of argumentation, it is liable to misuse. It is to misuse it to confound it with proof by experiment. By his use of the argument from experience Paul is far from justifying those who will accept as true only those elements of the Christian faith the truth of which they can verify by experiment. There is certainly an easily recognizable difference between trusting God for the future because we have known His goodness in the past, and casting ourselves from every pinnacle of the temple of truth

in turn to see whether He has really given His angels charge concerning us, according to His word.

¶ It is a matter of common knowledge how in Luther's experience the experience of the Apostle Paul was almost repeated in the strangest and most effective fashion. He, like the Apostle, had been living the life of the law, had been trying to win favour with God by doing things, had been trying to make himself a clean and honest man by his own efforts, and had failed. He was utterly miserable, because of his failures; and—as Paul was too—perhaps Luther was miserable because of the failure of the whole Church and the people round about him. He tells us how his desire is to do anything and everything that this Christ requires. Under the impulse of it he takes his journey to Rome that he may obtain whatever merit the pilgrimage may bring. He tells us with what feelings he faced the Eternal City, and journeyed on the road trodden by all the pilgrims of the past. In order, as he says, to leave no stone unturned, and to do whatever a man might, he began to crawl on his hands and knees up that sacred Santa Scala staircase, in the vain hope that he might win peace and freedom from purgatory. It was as he was creeping up that a voice came to him: "The just shall live by faith." And he felt in a moment what a fool he had been. He realized how it was not penance or pilgrimage or anything that he could do that would bring him nearer to Jesus Christ. What he needed was not what he was doing, but what Christ had done. From that moment, just as from the moment when the Apostle Paul saw a light on the road to Damascus, his whole horizon changed. Life became a new thing to him, and he understood that his business henceforth was simply to accept in gratitude the grace and pity of God, and not to go on striving to work out his own salvation and so attempt an impossible task. Thus the essence of the work of Jesus Christ came to be for Luther the fact that in Him God was giving Himself to and for men, and that in Him there was no longer any condemnation for sin, but an utter and absolute expression of the love of God. As he puts it, using the Apostle Paul's words, he was justified by faith. And for that reason the word justification became the great key-word of the Reformation.[1]

ii. Being justified.

There are two, and only two, possible meanings to be attached to the word which we translate "justify" in Paul's writings. It may mean either *make* righteous or *count* righteous,

[1] W. B. Selbie.

i.e. it may be either a moral term or a legal, judicial, or forensic term. And the great question is, In which of these two senses did Paul use the word? There can be no hesitation about our answer. It is the latter sense only which he uses. With him the term is a purely forensic one, and means to count or reckon as righteous. In spite of much opposition this meaning has gradually vindicated itself against the other, and is now almost unanimously held by all scholars who have a right to speak on the subject.

¶ A poet has described the secret moment when new life stirs within the earth at spring-tide, and which, though no man sees it, carries with it all the rich bloom of summer—

> There is a day in spring
> When under all the earth the secret germs
> Begin to glow and stir *before they bud.*
> The wealth and festal pomps of midsummer
> Lie in the heart of that inglorious day
> Which no man names with blessing, though its worth
> Is blest of all the world.

That is a symbol of all that lies in the first movement of new life in the soul; no man may know or name it, but God knows and names it with the name of Christ.[1]

iii. By Faith.

1. Justification comes by faith. As the Apostle says, in the case of Abraham his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness; therefore, he, too, was justified by faith. What, then, is faith in this connexion? We must remember that in all his treatment of his subject the Apostle is advocating and expounding a doctrine of salvation by grace alone, in opposition to the familiar Jewish doctrine of salvation by works. God saves men out of His boundless love. But who are the men whom He saves, and how do they appropriate the salvation He gives? Are all saved, or only some? and, if so, how is the selection made? It cannot be by merit, for that would be salvation by works. It is, says St. Paul, by faith. Men receive and appropriate the benefits of Christ's saving work as they trust in Him and enter into that union with Him which perfect faith involves.

[1] Walter Lock, *St. Paul the Master-Builder*, 77.

2. Faith is necessary in the adjustment of the legal relations of the saved sinner, called justification, in a peculiar sense and for a peculiar reason. The peculiar sense in which faith is necessary to justification is that, inasmuch as we must receive the righteousness of Christ in order to enjoy its legal benefits, we must have an instrument, or means of receiving it; and faith is that instrument. The peculiar reason why faith is necessary, and no other grace is available, is found in its own nature as adjusted to the work of receiving things. It is not because of its superior moral value to other graces of the Spirit, for Paul makes it equal in this respect to hope, but inferior to charity. It is exclusively related to justification, because it is a natural gesture of acceptance. The hand is the bodily organ for receiving things; it is naturally adapted for that purpose. It would be absurd to require one to receive an offered gift on the back of the head, because it has no natural adaptation for the purpose. Faith, and not love, joy, or hope, is the instrument of justification, because of its adaptation, as a natural gesture of acceptance, to receive the free gift of the righteousness of Christ, which carries justification and all the other elements of salvation with it.[1]

3. Words would fail one to describe the immense power which justification by faith has wielded in the experience of Christian men. Wherever you find a Christianity that is not merely formal, but vital and experimental, and try to probe to its foundations, you will reach at last the belief that a man is justified by his faith. This is the great tap-root out of which spring the sanctified life, the full assurance of faith, the peace that passeth understanding, the everlasting hope.[2]

¶ If you want to do any good with a poor miserable sinful outcast, a wastrel of humanity, your first step must be to establish confidence between yourself and him. You will find that he is a very bundle of suspicions, and that until you can get his confidence, all your well-meant efforts will fail; and it is just so between man and God. The natural attitude of sinful man towards a holy God is one of suspicion. It seems almost impossible to believe that He will not require something tremendous from us, that He can let bygones be bygones, and take and help us just as we are. And nothing but the sense of our justification can give us this confidence, the feeling that our redemption is God's matter, not ours,

[1] C. R. Vaughan. [2] W. B. Selbie.

that He takes us at a higher valuation than we dare set upon ourselves, and asks us not to do something for Him, but to let Him do everything for us. This it is which has been as the very opening of the prison-house to thousands of caged souls, and which has caused natures, starved and cold, to blossom out into new, warm, lovely life. And this it is which can deliver us from our bondage, and put a new song in our mouths.[1]

II.

Peace with God.

"Let us have peace with God" (R.V.).

1. The rendering of the Authorized Version is, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The alteration is very slight, being that of one letter in one word, the substitution of a long *o* for a short one. The majority of manuscripts of authority read "let us have," making the clause an exhortation and not a statement. But is not all that Paul has been saying just this, that to be justified by faith, to be declared righteous by reason of faith in Him who makes us righteous, is to have peace with God? Is not his exhortation an entirely superfluous one? No doubt that is what the old scribe thought who originated the reading which has crept into our Authorized Version. The two things do seem to be entirely parallel. To be justified by faith is a certain process, to have peace with God is the inseparable and simultaneous result of that process. But that is going too fast. "Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God," really is just this—see that you abide where you are; keep what you have. The exhortation is not to attain peace, but retain it. "Hold fast that thou hast; let no man take thy crown." "Being justified by faith," cling to your treasure and let nothing rob you of it—"let us have peace with God." The declaration of "not guilty" which the sinner comes under by a heartfelt embracing of Christianity at once does away with the state of hostility in which he had stood to God, and substitutes for it a state of peace which he has only to realize.

¶ In the Isle of Wight massive cliffs rise hundreds of feet above the sea, and seem as if they were as solid as the framework of the earth itself. But they rest upon a sharply inclined plane

[1] W. B. Selbie.

of clay, and the moisture trickles through the rifts in the majestic cliffs above, and gets down to that slippery substance and makes it like the greased ways down which they launch a ship; and away goes the cliff one day, with its hundreds of feet of buttresses that have fronted the tempest for centuries, and it lies toppled in hideous ruin on the beach below. We have all a layer of "blue slipper" in ourselves, and unless we take care that no storm-water finds its way down through the chinks in the rocks above they will slide into awful ruin.[1]

2. Is it not very beautiful to see how the Apostle here identifies himself, in all humility, with the Christians whom he is addressing, and feels that he, Apostle as he is, has the same need for the same counsel and stimulus as the weakest of those to whom he is writing have? It would have been so easy for him to isolate himself, and say, "Now you have peace with God; see that you keep it." But he puts himself into the same class as those whom he is exhorting, and that is what all of us have to do who would give advice that will be worth anything or of any effect. He does not stand upon a little molehill of superiority, and look down upon the Roman Christians, and imply that they have needs that he has not, but he exhorts himself too, saying, "Let all of us who have obtained like precious faith, which is alike in an Apostle and in the humblest believer, have peace with God."

3. The conception of *peace* is here distinguished by the addition of "with God," not merely from false peace, the peace with the world, which is destroyed by the operation of Christ (John xvi. 33), in that the latter calls forth a struggle against sin; but also from that higher degree of peace, that inward peace of soul, the peace with self, which St. Paul also calls "peace of God" (Phil. iv. 7; Col. iii. 15), and Christ in St. John's Gospel "my peace" (John xiv. 27). The two stand, in fact, in the same relation to one another as justification and sanctification; justification, or the reckoning for righteousness, gives at once reconciliation, and with it peace, the consciousness of being in a state of grace, the contrary to which is enmity against God. (See Rom. viii. 7.) No doubt this state contains within itself sanctification in the germ, but also only in the germ;

[1] A. Maclaren.

because the old man still lives, inward harmony of life is at first only partially restored. The completeness of this harmony is only a *fruit* of life in the Spirit (Rom. viii. 6; Gal. v. 22), whilst the life of faith *begins* with peace with God, because this flows at once from the first act of grace. As the author of peace in every form, God Himself is moreover called "the God of peace" (Rom. xv. 33; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 16).

¶ There is a clear distinction between peace with God and the peace of God, though they are so intimately connected that they are rarely if ever separated. There are doubtless some cases in which there is peace with God, while the poor trembling heart, not being assured of the blessing, is not enjoying the peace of God; but there are none who know the peace of God without being first brought to peace with God; for the peace of God is the holy, happy, peaceful rest which is granted to the heart which is no longer at enmity, and no longer under the burden of unforgiven sin. It is clear, therefore, that there must be the forgiveness before there can be the peace.[1]

4. Peace with God is reconciliation. It is the blessed fellowship between God and the sinner, when every barrier is removed, and the two, instead of being at variance, are at one. God's law being satisfied and His righteousness maintained, He is no longer called to shut the sinner out from His presence, but can, without the compromise of His own holiness, give him a welcome to His home in all the fulness of parental love. And the sinner is reconciled to God, for his hard heart is softened, his rebellion is at an end, his affections are changed, he hates that which he once loved, and loves that which he once hated, so that instead of being an enemy to God by wicked works, he loves Him, he delights in Him, he seeks Him, he follows Him; the joy of his heart is to do His will, and his great sorrow is that he cannot serve Him better. And thus it is that instead of enmity there is peace, instead of separation union, and instead of a conflict which involved rebellion on the one side and condemnation on the other, there is now such a union that we are able to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father."

¶ Peace is the special legacy bequeathed by Jesus to His disciples (John xiv. 27, xvi. 33); it is also the word used, with deep significance, after miracles of healing, attended with forgive-

[1] E. Hoare.

ness (Mark v. 34; Luke vii. 50). Boswell notes a remark of Johnson's upon this word. "He repeated to Mr. Langton with great energy, in the Greek, our Saviour's gracious expression concerning the forgiveness of Mary Magdalene: 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace' (Luke vii. 50). He said, 'The manner of this dismission is exceedingly affecting'" (*Life of Johnson*, chap. iv., under the date 1780). For other illustrations of this supreme and unique phase of the Christian life, we may turn to the hymns of Cowper, especially those stanzas commencing "Sometimes a light surprises," "So shall my walk be close with God," "Fierce passions discompose the mind," "There if Thy spirit touch the soul"; or to some of the descriptions in the *Pilgrim's Progress*.[1]

5. What does peace with God cover and include?

(1) It is peace with God's retributive righteousness. God governs the world, and the laws He has issued for obedience are holy, just, and good, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Seriously handicapped as man is by hereditary weakness and evil bias, he still can obey the law of faith, and through it the law of love. Disobedience ought, therefore, to be followed by punishment. Indeed, not to follow disobedience by punishment would be for God to confess His law defective or too severe, or else He Himself unable to punish. But God is able to punish. He can dash in pieces like a potter's vessel the kings of the earth; none can stay His hand. The wrath of God, therefore, is revealed from heaven against ungodliness and unrighteousness. How, then, can transgressors be at peace with this retributive righteousness of God? Only by being justified through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) And, secondly, we have peace with God's revealed truth; that is, that God is the Heavenly Father, that Jesus is His Christ and Son, who died for sin, and rose again from the dead. We are not only not opposed to or in doubt in respect of it, we are strongly assured of its eternal truth. Believing in God's grace, we experience its power; we know the power of Christ's death and resurrection. In the peace and moral power within us we have the inward witness to the truth; our faith has become the evidence of the thing not seen, the substance of the thing hoped for.

(3) But being justified by faith, let us also have peace with God's holy commandment. The whole question of keeping God's

[1] W. Sanday.

commandment is simply a question of *disposition*, as the whole question of justification is simply a question of *position* with God. Love is simply good disposition, and love is the fulfilling of the law. A disposition right and good towards God and man constrains to the fulfilment of God's purpose and precept. Being justified by faith, we receive this disposition. In justification God takes up the position towards us, not of an exacting Lawgiver, but of a gracious Father, offering us salvation through Christ. Believing in this position of God towards us we see the pure, infinite love of God, and, in receiving peace, we feel the greatness of the love which gives us such rich peace, enabling us to fulfil and to enjoy life.

(4) And then, being justified by faith, let us have peace with God's disciplinary providence through our Lord Jesus Christ; for our justification is overwhelming proof that God is not against us. If God had forgotten us He would never have sent His Christ on our behalf. If God were indifferent to our welfare He would not have given up that Christ to death. If God were not solemnly and profoundly in earnest to do us good He would not at so great a cost to Himself have come to us offering freely acquittal and acceptance. It cannot be that God, having done so much for us, is against us in these minor matters! No; His will is good to us, His heart is love to us, though our life bleeds and staggers beneath the burdens and the wounds.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe.[1]

III.

Through Christ.

"Through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."

1. *Our Lord Jesus Christ.* Do we ask, What part does Christ play in all this? According to St. Paul, it is all through Jesus

[1] R. Browning.

Christ our Lord. He is the one object of faith, and it is the acceptance of His work on our behalf which justifies us before God. And the Christian man so justified is spoken of as being in Christ, and as therefore being no longer under condemnation. The life in Christ is a life of faith and freedom, and is the direct and immediate consequence of our justification. Faith in Christ is more than mere belief about Him; it is a vital and spiritual union with Him by which we share His righteousness, and appropriate His work on our behalf. And herein we find the real, as in the process of justification we find the formal, content of our salvation. These two are not identical, but both different sides or aspects of the same process. We are justified, not through any works or merit of ours—past, present, or future—but through Christ, and in virtue of our relationship with Him by faith. Or, as the matter is sometimes stated, our faith causes God to see us, not as we are, but as we are *in Christ.*

2. *Access.* Jesus Christ gives us "access." Now that expression is but an imperfect rendering of the original. If it were not for its trivial associations, one might read, instead of "access," *introduction,*—"by whom we have introduction into this grace wherein we stand." The thought is that Jesus Christ secures us entry into this ample space, this treasure-house, as some court officer might take by the hand a poor rustic, standing on the threshold of the palace, and lead him through all the glittering series of unfamiliar splendour, and present him at last in the central ring around the king. The reality that underlies the metaphor is plain. We sinners can never pass into that central glory, nor ever possess those gifts of grace, unless the barrier that stands between us and God, between us and His highest gifts of love, is swept away.

¶ I recall an old legend where two knights are represented as seeking to enter a palace, where there is a mysterious fire burning in the middle of the portal. One of them tries to pass through, and recoils scorched; but when the other essays an entrance the fierce fire sinks, and the path is cleared. Jesus Christ has died, and, I say it with all reverence, as His blood touches the fire it flickers down and the way is opened "into the holiest of all, whither the Forerunner is for us entered."[1]

[1] A. Maclaren.

3. *Access into this grace.* There is clearly a metaphor here, both in the word "access" and in that other one, "stand." "The grace" is supposed to be some ample space into which a man is led, and where he can enjoy security and liberty. Or, we may say, it is regarded as a palace or treasure-house into which we can enter. Now, if we take that great New Testament word "grace," and ponder its meanings, we find that they run something in this fashion. The central thought, grand and marvellous, which is enshrined in it, and which often is buried for careless ears, is that of the active love of God poured out upon inferiors who deserve something very different. Then there follows a second meaning which covers a great part of the ground of the use of the phrase in the New Testament, and that is the communication of that love to men, the specific and individualized gifts which come out of that great reservoir of patient, pardoning, condescending, and bestowing love. Then there may be brought into view a meaning which is less prominent in Scripture but not absent, namely, the resulting beauty of character. A gracious soul ought to be, and is, a graceful soul; a supreme loveliness is imparted to human nature by the communication to it of the gifts which are the results of the undeserved, free, and infinite love of God.

¶ The one gift assumes all forms, just as water poured into a vase takes the shape of the vase into which it is poured. The same gift unfolds itself in a variety of manners, according to the needs of the man to whom it is given; just as the writer's pen, the carpenter's hammer, the farmer's ploughshare, are all made out of the same metal. So God's grace comes to you in a different shape from that in which it comes to me, according to our different callings and needs, as fixed by our circumstances, our duties, our sorrows, our temptations.[1]

¶ This House of Grace is the home in which the Christian lives. Its foundation is the Rock of Ages; its dome is in heaven. Its entrance is by that "new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Like the Father's house, it has many rooms; and all of them are tapestried with the beauties of holiness. Over its door is the legend, "The Just shall live by Faith." Its table is spread with a feast of fat things and wine upon the lees; and this feast is furnished with guests clothed in fine linen clean and white.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] D. J. Burrell.

4. *Wherein we stand.* This word "stand" is very emphatic here. It does not merely mean "continue," it suggests the Christian attitude. Two things are implied. One is that a life thus suffused by the love and enriched by the gifts and adorned by the loveliness that come from God, will be stable and steadfast. Resistance and stability are implied in the word. One very important item in determining a man's power of resistance, and of standing firm against whatever assaults may be hurled against him, is the sort of footing that he has. If you stand on slippery mud, or on the ice of a glacier, you will find it hard to stand firm; but if you plant your foot on the grace of God then you will be able to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." And how does a man plant his foot on the grace of God? Simply by trusting in God, and not in himself. So the secret of all steadfastness of life, and of all successful resistance to the whirling onrush of temptations and of difficulties, is to set your foot upon that rock, and then your "goings" will be established.

¶ The grace wherein we stand is the same as that on which Abraham stood, a righteousness reckoned, or imputed, to him when he had none of his own. The justified believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, and that righteousness is the rock on which he stands. He does not stand on his efforts, or his intentions, or his tears, or his joys, or his varied feelings of either joy or sorrow. But he stands on the righteousness of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He stands on the great fact that the Son of God has been his substitute on the Cross, and that as the Son of man He is now his representative before the throne.[1]

5. *By faith.* "By faith we have access." That is no arbitrary appointment. It lies in the very nature of the gift and of the recipient. How can God give access into that grace to a man who shrinks from being near Him; who does not want "access," and who could not use the grace if he had it? How can God bestow inward and spiritual gifts upon any man who closes his heart against them, and will not have them? My faith is the condition; Christ is the Giver. If I ally myself to Him by my faith, He gives to me. If I do not, with all the will to do it, He cannot bestow His best gifts any more than a man who stretches out his hand to another sinking in the flood can lift him out, and

[1] E. Hoare.

set him on the safe shore, if the drowning man's hand is not stretched out to grasp the rescuer's outstretched hand.

¶ We are all "solifidians" now. The word is obsolete; but it was eloquent in its time. It means depending on faith alone. The guests at this table claim no personal merit. They recognise the value of morality, but are frank to confess that in their works, however good or many, there is neither expiatory value nor earning capacity. The only meritorious thing they have ever done is to believe in Christ; which is not the purchase price but the condition affixed to the gift of everlasting life. And even that faith is not their own; it is the gift of God.[1]

IV.

In Hope of the Glory.

"And let us rejoice (exult) in hope of the glory of God."

1. *What is the glory of God?* It is the Glory of the Divine Presence (Shekinah) communicated to man (partially here, but) in full measure when he enters into that Presence. Man's whole being will be transfigured by it. The phrase, "the glory of God," is, in the Old Testament, used specially to mean the light that dwelt between the cherubim above the mercy-seat; the symbol of the divine perfections and the token of the Divine Presence. The reality of which it was a symbol is the total splendour, so to speak, of that divine nature, as it rays itself out into all the universe. And, says Paul, the true hope of the Christian man is nothing less than that he shall be, in some true sense, and in an eternally growing degree, the real possessor of that glory.

¶ The very heart of Christianity is that the Divine Light of which that Shekinah was but a poor and transitory symbol has "tabernacled" amongst men in the Christ, and has from Him been communicated, and is being communicated, in such measure as earthly limitations and conditions permit, and that these do point assuredly to perfect impartation hereafter, when "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." The Three could walk in the furnace of fire, because there was One with them, "like unto the Son of God." "Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting fire," the fire of that divine perfection? They who have had introduction by Christ into the grace, and who will be led by Him into the glory.

[1] D. J. Burrell.

¶ The glory of the Christian is not simply to behold the glory of his risen and glorified Lord. Oh, marvellous grace, he is to participate in it! For the same Christ who made that imperative prayer in the upper room gave this promise also, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne; even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."[1]

2. *Rejoicing in hope of the glory.* The word here translated "rejoicing" is "boasting" or "exulting." Sometimes it is used in the New Testament in a bad sense, of a proud boasting in something as one's own; sometimes in a good sense, of thankful rejoicing in God's presence or gifts, as here. Such rejoicing is possible only upon justification. Or at least only then is it safe. No doubt if you can make a man look forward, you do him a wonderful good, you raise him in the scale of existence; he is not a mere grovelling animal any longer. It is not surprising, therefore, that people have talked so much about the advantage of expecting another state of existence, of the good which must come from hoping for its blessings; of the watchfulness which is awakened in a man who is taught how he may escape a distant evil that is threatening him. There has been no exaggeration in statements of this kind, there scarcely can be any. But there may be the most fatal omissions in them, omissions which make that which is told worse than a mockery.

¶ The argument for a future state, as Butler has so well shown, arises from the sense of continuance which there is in our minds. That which is, must be assumed to go on, unless you can bring some decisive proof that it is interrupted. There is no proof, from the reason of the thing or from the analogy of nature, that death is such an interruption. If not, the belief in a present state involves the belief in a future one. But what is to continue? What is it that is not interrupted? It is my existence. It is I whom death cannot dissolve; when it has destroyed everything that is about me, all the conditions in which I am living, it yet leaves me. What is the use of telling me about felicities hereafter or miseries hereafter, if you tell me at the same time, if my own heart and conscience tell me, that I shall be the same, with the same capacity for making a hell of heaven or a heaven of hell which I have now? It can be no message of peace to me, that there is a futurity of bliss or a futurity of misery, unless you can first reveal to me something about myself, unless you can reveal

[1] D. J. Burrell.

to me how I may not be the subject of a perpetual intestine war. And this must be a present message. It cannot be merely of something which is to be. Watchfulness to avoid future evils may be a very desirable quality. But what is it, if I think that I am myself the great evil of which I need to be rid? Hope may be the most glorious of all possessions. What can I hope for, if my own being is my continual terror and torment?[1]

Man's life is but a working day
  Whose tasks are set aright:
A time to work, a time to pray,
  And then a quiet night.
And then, please God, a quiet night
Where palms are green and robes are white;
A long-drawn breath, a balm for sorrow,
And all things lovely on the morrow.[2]

[1] F. D. Maurice. [2] C. G. Rossetti.

God's own Love.

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God's own Love.

But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.—Rom. v. 8.

1. Why does the Cross of Jesus Christ win our devotion? What is the attraction by which it draws us and holds us to Him? It is because of the supreme expression which it gives to the *love* of God. "While we were yet sinners," provoking only the Divine displeasure, God places beyond all doubt, "commends," *i.e.* proves, the depth and the strength of His love towards us by persevering in His purpose to compass our salvation even to the sacrifice of His dear Son.

2. So love is the starting-point. Faith requires a starting-point from which to pursue its course, a fundamental idea on which to build, an underlying ultimate cause, in which, as in Calvary's rock, to plant the Cross. Deny this to faith, and faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified becomes a vague and fitful conception, floating about a cross which is rather a figure of speech than a fixed and unalterable reality. The soul hungers to find that starting-point. It cannot take Jesus Christ and Him crucified as an incident, an afterthought, an heroic rescue devised in an emergency. It feels instinctively that the Cross must be the result of some deeper cause. It demands to be led to that deeper cause, that it may make it the starting-point of thought. Such a starting-point is provided in the formula: The Atonement not the cause of God's Love, but Love the cause of the Atonement.

¶ The Atonement is the expression on earth of a love that filled God's heart from the beginning. The Atonement is God's self-giving to save us from the holy wrath under which our sins have brought us. The love of the holy God is the starting-point from which to think one's way up to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Begin there, with the knowledge that God is love. Be sure that a holy God loves you. Be sure that because He is

holy, His wrath, the indignant, sorrowful wrath of holy love, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Be sure that that tremendous love has expressed itself in sacrificial suffering to save you from that tremendous wrath. Take these thoughts, put them together, and realise two facts: the nature of sin, the Person of Christ. Realize the nature of sin; it is a scorn of the Atonement, a contempt of God's supreme declaration of love, a delivering over of one's self to wrath, the wrath which is, because God is holy. Realize the Person of Christ. Behold in Him the Holy God whose wrath is revealed against sin, suffering in the flesh for love, to save from that wrath. Realize the Godhead of Christ. Grasp the sense in which Christ declares the Unity of Godhead when He says: "I and my Father are one;" and realizing the Unity of the Godhead, bow before the Cross as before a throne.[1]

¶ Perhaps we do not yet know what the word "to love" means. There are within us lives in which we love unconsciously. To love thus means more than to have pity, to make inner sacrifices, to be anxious to help and give happiness; it is a thing that lies a thousand fathoms deeper, where our softest, swiftest, strongest words cannot reach it. At moments we might believe it to be a recollection, furtive but excessively keen, of the great primitive unity.[2]

I.

God's own Love.

God commends or proves *His own* love. It is a love which, like all that belongs to that timeless, self-determining Being, has its reason and its roots in Himself alone. We love because we discern the object to be lovable. God loves by the very necessity of His nature. Like some artesian well that needs no pumps or machinery to draw up the sparkling waters to flash in the sunlight, there gushes up from the depths of His own heart the love which pours over every creature that He has made. He loves because He is God.

Like life, love is of many kinds. There is a love that ennobles and casts a radiance upon life. There is a love that drags the lover down into the mouth of hell. There is a love

[1] C. C. Hall. [2] Maurice Maeterlinck.

that many waters cannot quench. There is a love that is disguised lust. What kind of love is God's own love?

1. It is *a righteous love.* Some of the saddest tragedies in human life spring from the moral weakness of the deepest love. Love is the mother of all tenderness, and tenderness shrinks instinctively from what is stern or rigorous. So love often becomes a minister of ruin. How many a mother, who would have laid down her life for her son, she loved him so, has only helped him down the road to ruin by the immoral weakness of her love. How many a father, to spare the bitter agony of punishing his child, has let his child grow up unchastened. Such love as that is fatal. Sooner or later it tarnishes the thought of fatherhood in the child's eyes. For in his view of fatherhood the child can find no place now for earnest hatred of the wrong, and passionate devotion to the right; and so the image that, full of moral beauty, should have inspired him through all life's journey, is robbed of its ennobling power by its unrighteous weakness. And if out of the page of history you wipe the atoning death on Calvary, you carry that tragedy of weakness into the very heavens. Blot out the Cross, and I, a child of heaven, can never be uplifted and inspired by the thought of the Divine Fatherhood again. Yes, I have sinned, and know it. I deserve chastisement and death; I know it. And shall my Father never whisper a word of punishment? and never breathe His horror at my fall? And will He love me, and be kind to me right through it all without a word of warning? I tell you, the moment I could believe *that*, the glory of the Divine Fatherhood is tarnished for me, God's perfect law of goodness and awful hatred of the wrong are dimmed; and all the impulse and enthusiasm these Divine passions bring sink out of my life for ever. But when I turn to Calvary, and to that awful death, I see a love as righteous as it is wonderful.[1]

¶ Love grows out of holiness, and holiness in its turn flows out of love, and they cannot exist apart. A father loves; and just in proportion to his love is his pain when the children of his love do wrong; no other pain can be like that pain; no disappointed affection, no separation to distant lands, no loss by death, can cut the soul with the same wound as the wrong-

[1] G. H. Morrison.

doing of one on whom the heart is set. A father who sees a loved child dishonour all his love, a sister who sees the brother whom she admires disgracing the picture of him that her mind had drawn, the mother who watches with agony the son of her affections cast himself away on profligate pleasures, is thrilled with a pang whose bitterness stands quite alone. Such pains as these are the measure of that wrath with which God, our Father, tells us that He regards our sins. But in spite of wrath He is still our Father, and still He draws us by the cords of an infinite love back to Himself again.[1]

¶ I cannot tell you the delight that I have found in thinking of God's love to man as a disapproving love. Man confounds love and approbation, or love and interestedness. Thus a man loves those whom he thinks well of, or who are necessary to his happiness. But God's love acknowledges and demands nothing either amiable or serviceable in its objects. The love of my God is not diminished by His disapprobation of me. There is something remarkable in Christ's substitution for Barabbas in a way more especial than for any other individual, that he might be an example of those for whom He died.[2]

2. It is *a self-sacrificing love.* It is a love that thought no sacrifice too great. The surest test of love is sacrifice. We measure love as we should measure her twin-brother life, "by loss, and not by gain, not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth." Look at the mother with her child. She sacrifices ease and sleep, and she would sacrifice life, too, for her little one, she loves her baby so. Think of the patriot and his country. He counts it joy to drain his dearest veins, he loves his land so well. Recall the scholar at his books. Amusements, intercourse, and sleep, he almost spurns them. His love for learning is so deep he hardly counts them loss. Yes, in the willingness to sacrifice all that is dearest lies the measure of noblest love. Turn now to Calvary, turn to the Cross, and by the sight of the crucified Redeemer there, begin to learn the greatness of God's love.

¶ God is holy. He is without sin. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but He can sympathize with sinners. With all the vicarious passion of undying love, He enters into our experience, shares our woe and sorrow, our despair and remorse, and tastes our sin. Just as one suffers for and with his child in trouble, so does God with His children.

[1] F. Temple. [2] *Letters of Thomas Erskine*, i. 153.

Thus we find ourselves in the Godhead. Thus a great love bridges the chasm between God's holiness and man's guilt. Love spreads its white wings and flies across the abyss. That flight neither tires nor frightens love. Indeed love effaces the chasm.

¶ Recently in New York City a baby's life was saved through the transfusion of blood from the body of the father into that of his child. The operation was one of the most remarkable of its kind and has excited the keen interest of many outside the medical profession. Because of the delicate and dangerous character of the operation, it was impossible to use either anæsthetics or a connecting tube uniting the body of father and child. When the operation began the child was in a dying condition, and before the operation was finished, to ordinary appearances, it was dead. The father's arm was opened from the wrist to the elbow and a vein lifted out. An opening was then made in the child's leg and the blood-vessels of parent and offspring stitched together. An attending surgeon said to the father, "Does it hurt?" With a face livid with pain he said, "It hurts like hell, but if I can save the baby, what of it?" At last everything was ready for the red tide from the father's heart to enter the apparently lifeless little body lying across his slashed arm; and the instant the blood rushed into the child's body it revived. What had been practically a dead body was quickened.[1]

3. It is *a love for sinners.* It is here that, wide as the poles, God's love stands separate from all the love of men. "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God longs to love me into something lovable. But not for anything lovable in me did He love me first. While I was yet a sinner He loved me. While I hated Him He loved me. While I was fighting against Him, in the rebellious years, He loved me. If we love Him, it is because He first loved us. Such causeless love is wonderful, passing the love of women.[2]

¶ God is gracious and merciful, as the Scriptures show. He loves even real sinners. Yea, to the blind, hard world, which lieth in the wicked one, He has sent as a Saviour His own Son. I could not have done that, and yet I am a real sinner myself.[3]

¶ A prominent Sunday-school worker, who was accustomed, in former years, to visit Sunday-schools, and to address the little ones there, sometimes startled the little folks in the primary department, and even their teachers, by his unlooked-for questions and statements. "What kind of children does God love?" he

[1] J. I. Vance, *Tendency*, 73. [2] G. H. Morrison. [3] Luther.

would ask. "Good children," "Good children," would come back the answer from the confident little ones in every part of the room. "Doesn't God love any children but good children?" the visitor would ask. "No, sir," would be the hearty response. Then the visitor would startle or shock the little ones, and sometimes their teacher, by saying plainly and deliberately: "I think that God loves bad children very dearly." At this, some of the surprised little ones would draw up their mouths, and perhaps exclaim, "Oh!" Others would simply stare in bewilderment. Perhaps the teacher would have a look of wonder or regret, and wait for the next disclosure of ignorance or error on the speaker's part. "Did I say that God loved to have little children bad?" was the visitor's next question. "No, sir," would come back from some of the startled little ones in a tone of relief. "No, I didn't say that God loves to have children bad. God loves to have children good. He wants them to be very good,—as good as they can be. But when they are bad children God still loves them. God is very loving, and He keeps on loving little ones who don't even love Him at all." That would be a new idea to many of those little ones. And there is nothing that a child is quicker to catch, or gladder to receive, than a bright, new idea at any time. The average child would take in the thought suggested quicker and more willingly than the average teacher. Then the visitor would make the thought plainer to the pupils by an illustration. "Does your mother love you?" he would ask. Almost every child would promptly answer, "Yes, sir," to that question. "Were you ever a bad child?" was the next home thrust. "Yes, sir," would come back faintly from some. "Did your mother stop loving you then? Did you have to feel that there was no loving mother to go back to, because you were a bad child?" The child heart recoiled from that thought, knowing the mother heart too well to admit it. Then was the time to press the precious truth that God loves bad children more than the lovingest father or the lovingest mother in the world loves a child; that, even when the father and mother forsake a needy child, the Lord will take up that child tenderly. That Sunday-school worker found, in his wide field of observation, how common and how deep-seated is the idea that a child's acceptance with God is rather because of the child's lovableness than because of God's lovingness. Nor is this fearful error to be found merely, or chiefly, among primary-class pupils and their teachers.[1]

¶ A poor ignorant woman had been ill-used by her husband, a worthless wretch. She had had to work hard for a precarious

[1] H. C. Trumbull, *Our Misunderstood Bible*, 164.

livelihood because he refused to work at all. Life was so hard and dark for her that she might have been excused for hating and scorning the man who had made it so. This was Calvary over again, you see; and this child of God was being crucified. The day came when the husband was sentenced to penal servitude for a crime against society. One day the person who tells the story met this woman helping a broken-down man along the street towards her home. It was the released convict, and he looked the brute he was. Her explanation of her action was, "You see, sir, Jim has no one but me now."[1]

¶ An English clergyman was once preaching to a congregation of young people. During the discourse he narrated the story of a Russian nobleman who, with his wife and child, was driving through a forest. Soon they became aware by the frantic way in which the horses struggled and strained at the traces, as they sped along at a furious pace, that the animals feared some calamity. As the frightened steeds tore through a ravine and up a high hill, those in the carriage looked back fearfully, and across the white fields of snow on the hill they had left, they saw a black moving mass, and knew that a pack of ferocious wolves was following them. Every nerve was strained to reach the village, still a few miles distant; but the wolves drew nearer and nearer, and at last the coachman cut away the traces and set two of the leaders free, just as the wolves were approaching. The hungry pack turned its attention from the carriage to the unfortunate horses thus set free. They were speedily torn in pieces, and then, with their appetites whetted, the wolves continued their pursuit in full cry after the carriage, now some distance ahead. The coachman again felt the wolves approaching, but he could not sacrifice the two remaining horses. So he nobly volunteered to sacrifice himself, and imploring his master to take his place on the box as the only hope of saving his wife and daughter, the devoted servant descended and stood in the middle of the road, revolver in hand, attempting vainly, as he well knew, to bar the progress of the pack. The carriage dashed into the village. The nobleman sallied forth at once with a crowd of armed villagers in quest of the noble-hearted servant, whose voluntary sacrifice had saved three precious lives; but after beating back the wolves they found, as they had feared, that he had paid the price of his life for his devotion. "Now," said the clergyman, pointedly addressing his hearers, "was that man's devotion equal to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ?" A young girl in the audience, carried away with rapt interest in the story, answered clearly, "No, sir." "Why not?" said the preacher.

[1] R. J. Campbell.

"Because," replied the young girl, "that man died for his friends, but the Lord Jesus died for His enemies."[1]

II.

We need to have God's own Love commended to us.

1. "God commendeth his own love"—that is true and beautiful, but that is not all that the Apostle means. We "commend" persons and things when we speak of them with praise and confidence. If that were the meaning of the text it would represent the death of Christ as setting forth, in a manner to win our hearts, the greatness, the excellence, the transcendency, of God's love. But there is more than that in the words. The expression here employed strictly means to set two things side by side, and it has two meanings in the New Testament, both derived from that original signification. It sometimes means to set two persons side by side, in the way of introducing and recommending the one to the other. It sometimes means to set two things side by side, in the way of confirming or proving the one by the other. It is used in the latter sense here. God not merely "commends," but "proves," His love by Christ's death.

¶ But "proves" is a cold word. It is addressed to the head. "Commends" is a warmer word. It is addressed to the heart. It is not enough to establish the fact that God loves. Arguments may be wrought in frost as well as in fire. But it is the heart that must be reached—through the head, indeed; but it is a small thing to be orthodox believers in a doctrine. Christ must be not only the answer to our doubts, but the Sovereign of our affections. Do we look on the death of Christ as a death for our sin? In the strength of the revelation that it makes of the love of God, do we front the perplexities, the miseries of the world, and the ravelled skeins of Providence with calm, happy faces? And—most important of all—do we meet that love with an answering love?[2]

2. There are some attributes of God that need no proof. Some features of the Divine character are so universally conspicuous as to be self-evidencing. Think, for example, of God's *power*. If we believe in God at all we need no argument to convince us of His power. The mighty forces that engirdle us all cry aloud of that. The chambers of the deep, the chariot of the sun, are

[1] L. A. Banks. [2] A. Maclaren.

stamped with it. The devastating march of the winter's storm, and, none the less, the timely calling of all the summer's beauty out of the bare earth—these things, and a thousand other things like these, teach us the power of God. We would not need the Cross if all that had to be proved was the Divine omnipotence. Or take the *wisdom* of God. Is any argument needed to assure us in general of that? Day unto day uttereth speech of it, and night unto night showeth forth its glory. Our bodies, so fearfully and so wonderfully made; our senses, linking us so strangely to the world without; our thought, so swift, so incomprehensible; and all the constancy of nature, and all the harmony of part with part, and all the obedience of the starry worlds, and all the perfections of the wayside weeds,—these things, and a multitude of things like these, speak to the thinking mind of the wisdom of the God with whom we have to do. That wisdom needs no formal proof. It is self-evidencing. We would not need the Cross if all that had to be proved was the wisdom of God.

3. But that God is a God of love has to be proved to men. For—

(1) Man does not naturally believe it. As a matter of fact, he is indisposed to believe it, he is disposed to doubt it. The great object of the great enemy of souls is to induce scepticism on this point, and not so much intellectual scepticism, as a practical habit of unbelief in it. Men, as a matter of fact, are disposed to listen to the malignant aspersions of God which are whispered into their ears by the great foe of God and man, and to take an altogether false and misleading view of the Divine character. A certain latent suspicion of God is at the root of human sin: a considerable number of persons do not think of God's love towards them at all; and some of those who do think of it cannot bring themselves to believe that His love is a personal affection and is directed towards specific objects, that God regards each of us severally, just as though there were not another intelligent creature in the world for Him to regard.

¶ Comparative mythology has taught a great many lessons, and amongst others this, that, apart from the direct or indirect influences of Christianity, there is no creed to be found in which the belief in a God of love, and in the love of God, is unfalteringly proclaimed, to say nothing of being set as the very climax of the whole revelation. If this were the place, one could pass in

review men's thoughts about God, and ask you to look at all that assemblage of beings before whom mankind has bowed down. What would you find? Gods cruel, gods careless, gods capricious, gods lustful, gods mighty, gods mysterious, gods pitying (with a contempt mingled with the pity) their sorrows and follies, but in all the pantheons there is not a *loving* god.[1]

(2) It is not self-evident in Nature. There are things in nature which make it hard to believe in the love of God. One is the tremendous struggle for existence that is ceaselessly waged among all living things. Man fights with man, and beast with beast; bird fights with bird, and fish with fish. To the seeing eye the world is all a battlefield, and every living creature in it is in arms, and fighting for its life. The watchword of nature is not peace, but war. The calmest summer evening, to him who knows old nature's story, is only calm as the battlefield is calm where multitudes lie dead. Under that outward peace, which often, like a mantle, seems to enwrap the world, by night and day, on sea and land, the bloodiest of wars is being waged, creature, merciless and venomous, preying upon creature. For right to live, for room to grow, for food to eat, in grim and fearful silence the awful war goes on.

¶ There may be some rarer spirits who, like Browning, can reason from the presence of power in Nature to the presence of love.

> In youth I looked to these very skies,
> And probing their immensities,
> I found God there, his visible power;
> Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
> Of the power, an equal evidence
> That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.
> For the loving worm within its clod,
> Were diviner than a loveless god
> Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.[2]

(3) The experiences of life do not prove it. There are the problems of human pain and sorrow and bereavement. Is it not very hard to reconcile these darker shadows with the light of heavenly love? What is the meaning of the suffering that seemed to fall so causelessly on her you loved? Can God be love, and never move a finger to ease your little child when he is screaming day and night in fearful agony? When in the

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 25.

sudden tornado a whole city is swept away; when from your arms your dearest joy is torn away; when those who would not harm a living creature are bowed for years under intolerable pain, and when the wicked and the coarse seem to get all they wish, who has not cried, "Can God be love if He permits all this? How can God say He loves me, and yet deal with me as I could never have the heart to deal with one I loved?" We have only to look into our own lives and to look round upon the awful sights that fill the world to make the robustest faith in the goodness and love of God stagger, unless it can stay itself against the upright stem of the Cross of Christ. Sentimentalists may talk, but the grim fact of human suffering, of wretched, helpless lives, rises up to say that there is no evidence broad and deep and solid enough, outside Christianity, to make it absolutely certain that God is love.

¶ The things which to-day are our seeming friends, become to-morrow our real foes. The brook which this morning supplies us with the water of life and charms our ear by its babble, may to-morrow become a raging flood, and bring desolation to our fields and ruin to our homes. The sun in whose brightness and warmth we bask to-day, may in a short time scorch our fields, dry up our fountains, and thus become our destroyer. The clouds which spread such delicious coolness over our cities and plains and inspire us with new energy, may suddenly gather and blacken, and by their thunder and lightning lay us low with terror or blast our existence. Who in face of all this shall trust that

> God was love indeed
> And love Creation's final law—
> Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravine, shriek'd against his creed?

In all ages men have had the feelings so beautifully expressed by Tennyson:

> The Gods are hard to reconcile:
> 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
> There *is* confusion worse than death,
> Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
> Long labour unto aged breath,
> Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
> And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

(4) The conscience, when it is awake, protests against such a notion as this, that God is a God of love. For every one who honestly takes stock of himself, and conceives of God in any measure aright, must feel that the fact of sin has come in to disturb all the relations between God and man. And when once a man comes to say, "I feel that I am a sinful man, and that God is a righteous God; how can I expect that His love will distil in blessings upon my head?" there is only one answer—"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Whence has the world her magic power?
Why deem we death a foe?
Recoil from weary life's best hour,
And covet longer woe?

The cause is Conscience—Conscience oft
Her tale of guilt renews:
Her voice is terrible though soft,
And dread of Death ensues.[1]

III.

God commends His own Love to us in that, while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.

1. There are only two ways in which the human mind can get the assurance that love is not merely its own ideal, but in very deed the ultimate law and final goal of the world. The one way is that it should attain to such perfect insight into the course of the world's history as to convince itself that, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, everything is really working together for good. The other way is that it should be inspired with a confidence in the Creator and Ruler of the world strong enough to enable it to feel sure that all must come right in the end, however dark and dense the clouds may be which now encompass Him and conceal His ways—in a word, the way of faith, which sings:

Still will we trust, though earth seem dark and dreary,
And the heart faint beneath His chastening rod;
Though rough and steep our pathway, worn and weary,
Still will we trust in God.

[1] Cowper.

These are the only two ways open to us: the way of *exact knowledge* and the way of *faith.*

2. Now there appears to be at first a ready answer to the inquiry, How shall man be taught that God loves him? It will naturally suggest itself to our mind to reply, God has only to reveal Himself to us, He has only to appear in some form that we can apprehend, He has only to speak to us as God in terms that we can understand, leaving us no longer in any degree of uncertainty about His relations with us, but directly asserting this fact in a distinctly supernatural manner, and then we shall be persuaded readily enough of the truth. But here we are first brought face to face with the difficulty that, in order to make such a revelation of Himself, God would first of all have to contravene the fundamental principles of His government on earth. From that time forth we should be walking by sight, no longer by faith; and in ordering things thus He would also, so far as we can judge of the circumstances of the case, be withdrawing from us that splendid purpose, that grand design, in the fulfilment of which the human race is to reach its true destiny and receive its crown.

3. Other possible solutions might be offered. Of all the solutions, however, that might have occurred to us none such as this would ever have suggested itself. Not the boldest among us, not the most daring speculator, would have been presumptuous enough to suggest that God Himself should divest Himself of His Divine glory, should clothe Himself in human form, and give Himself up to take the place of guilty man, and to bear the burden of human sin; that God in His own Person as man, Himself at once human and Divine, should undergo the terrible penalty that sin deserved; that He, weighted with the overwhelming load of human guilt, should hang upon a felon's tree, should submit to have His heart crushed and broken by that terrible burden; that He should die in agony, in order that He might demonstrate to all mankind, wherever the story of His passion went, what that so great love of God to man actually is, that love wherewith God loves the world and every man that He has made in it.

i. Christ died for us.

1. The first thing, then, to know is that Christ died **for us.** It is not that He lived and died. It is that He died. We have not got within sight of the secret of Jesus, nor come near tapping the sources of His power, if we confine ourselves to His words and His teaching, or even to the lower *acts* of His gentle life. We must go to the Cross. It would have been much that He should have spoken with certitude and with sweetness else unparalleled of the love of God. But words, however eloquent, however true, are not enough for the soul to rest its weight upon. We must have deeds, and these are all summed up in "Christ died for us."

> For ofttimes Love must grieve;
> For us content and willing to be sad,
> It left the halls wherein they made it glad,
> And came to us that grieved it; oft below
> It hides its face because it will not show
> The stain upon it. Now I feel its clear
> Full shining eyes upon me, and I know
> Soon I shall meet the kiss without the tear![1]

2. It is the death of *Christ.* God proves His love because *Christ* died. How so? God proved His love because Socrates died? God proved His love because some self-sacrificing doctor went into a hospital and died in curing others? God proved His love because some man sprang into the sea and rescued a drowning woman at the cost of his own life? Would such talk hold? Then how comes it that Paul ventures to say that God proved His love, because Jesus Christ died?

(1) It is the death of *the Son of God.* Where is the force of the fact of a man's death to prove God's love? Underlying that swift sentence of the Apostle there is a presupposition, which he takes for granted. "God was in Christ," in such fashion that whatsoever Christ did was the revelation of God. There is no force of proof in the words of the text unless we come to the full belief, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

¶ Some great martyr dies for his fellows. Well, all honour to him, and the race will come to his tomb for a while, and bring their wreaths and their sorrow. But what bearing has his death

[1] Dora Greenwell.

upon our knowledge of God's love towards us? None whatever, or at most a very indirect and shadowy one. We have to dig deeper down than that. "God commends his love . . . in that Christ died." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And we have the right and the obligation to argue back from all that is manifest in the tender Christ to the heart of God, and say, not only, God so loved the world that he sent His Son, but to see that the love that was in Christ is the manifestation of the love of God Himself.

(2) It is the death of the Son of God *for us*. That "for us" implies two things: one the voluntary act of God in Christ in giving Himself up to the death, the other the beneficial effect of that death. It was on our behalf, therefore it was the spontaneous outgush of an infinite love. It was for us, in that it brought an infinite benefit. And so it was a token and a manifestation of the love of God such as nothing else could be.

¶ During the great American civil war the Northern States had to resort to conscription to fill up the ranks thinned by carnage. There was a man drawn for the army who had a wife and children who were wholly dependent upon him; so you may suppose when the lot fell on him to go forth and fight his country's battles there was great lamentation in his family; his wife was almost broken-hearted, and his children were weeping in sore distress. Shortly after this, however, a young man who had been a friend of his for many years, hearing that he had been drawn, came to see him, and of his own accord offered himself as a substitute. "I have made arrangements," said he, "about my business, and I am going to the war in your place, to be your substitute. I have neither wife nor child, and if I die I shall leave no helpless friends behind me to struggle on in a weary world without comfort or support." Expostulation was vain, he could not be turned from his purpose, his friend had to yield, and you may imagine the gratitude of wife and children thus suddenly relieved from a terrible danger. Months passed on, months of conflict and carnage, the noblest and best of a great nation were pitted against each other, and the fearful struggle drenched the soil of the *dis-United* States with the blood of their valiant citizens. It was a terrible time, and over North and South alike there hung a cloud of gloom, and on every heart there lay a dread sense of uncertainty and apprehension. Day by day through all this weary period, as soon as the mails came in, that father, living in his own peaceful home, used to snatch up the newspaper, tear it open, and eagerly run his eye down the list

of the wounded and killed; day by day he scanned the fatal column with hope and fear, lest haply he should see there the name of his faithful friend. Months passed on, and the war became more and more terrible, and tragic incidents were multiplied, hundreds and thousands of brave fellows were being hurried into eternity, but still his friend was spared. One day, however, on opening the paper, and glancing as usual over that sad column, the first thing that met his eye was the name of his substitute amongst the slain. He hurried to the field of battle. There, amidst the slaughtered men, he found the body that he sought. Sorrowfully and tenderly, with a brother's love, and with more than a brother's gratitude, he lifted that corpse from the gory plain, and bore it in his own arms off the battlefield, and brought it with him back to his own home, there laid it in his own family tomb, and in that cemetery at this day you will find over the young soldier's grave the simple but touching epitaph, "*He died for me!*"[1]

(3) But there is one thing more—it is the death of the Son of God *instead of us.* "Died for us"—that expression plainly implies two things: first, that Christ died of His own accord, being impelled by a great motive, love; and second, that that voluntary death, somehow or other, is for our behoof and advantage. The word in the original, "for," does not define in what way that death ministers to our advantage. But it does assert that for those Roman Christians who had never seen Jesus Christ, and by consequence for you and me, there is benefit in the fact of that death. Now, suppose we quote an incident in the story of missionary martyrdom. There was a young lady, whom some of us knew and loved, in a Chinese mission station, who, with the rest of the missionary band, was fleeing. Her life was safe. She looked back, and saw a Chinese boy whom her heart twined round, in danger. She returned to save him. They laid hold of her and flung her into the burning house, and her charred remains have never been found. That was a death for another, but "Jesus died for us" in a deeper sense than that. Take another case. A man sets himself to some great cause, not his own, and he sees that in order to bless humanity, either by the proclamation of some truth, or by the origination of some great movement, or in some other way, if he is to carry out his purpose, he must give his

[1] Canon Hay Aitken.

life. He does so, and dies a martyr. What he aimed at could only be done by the sacrifice of his life. The death was a means to his end, and he died for his fellows. That is not the depth of the sense in which Paul meant that Jesus Christ died for us. It was not that He was true to His message, and, like many another martyr, died. There is only one way in which any beneficial relation can be established between the Death of Christ and us, and it is that when He died He died for us, because "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree."[1]

ii. The Commendation.

What is the nature of the proof or commendation? What does the death of Christ for us make known to us of God's own love?

1. *The Fact of it.* God is jealous for our true happiness. We read it on the Cross. He seeks to save us from pains and penalties which we have justly deserved, and to secure us joys and comforts to which we had no claim; and in order to compass these ends He has made the most stupendous sacrifice that it was possible for Him to make. How can His will be opposed to our happiness when He has used such means to secure it? how can He desire to rob us of anything worth having when He has brought so much within our reach? The old Greek idea of an envious God, who must needs regard with jealous eye any unusual amount of human happiness—an idea by no means confined to ancient Greece—is incompatible with, and is contradicted by, the revelation made on the Cross of Calvary.

2. *The Depth of it.* Not only do we learn the fact of God's love toward us by considering the ends for which He was content to let the Saviour die, which are rendered explicable only by the existence of such a love, but we are also able to form some conception at least of the intensity of that love. So far as it can be measured, the Cross of Christ is the measure of the love of God. One of the vastest words is that little word "so" in the third chapter of St. John. Let down the plummet into that word as deep as you can, there is still a depth below it; but if we seek to

[1] A. Maclaren.

form some idea of that depth, we are referred to Calvary as God's answer to our inquiries.

3. *The Fulness of it.* If, when we were ungodly and unrighteous, helpless subjects and slaves of our sins, God so loved us as, altogether of Himself, for the praise of the glory of His own grace, apart from any merit or answer or anticipation of love on our part—nay, while we were yet enemies to Him—if then and thus God so loved us as, at such a price and cost, to provide for us so great a salvation; if upon the ground of the salvation thus provided, and our acceptance of it with a faith answering to His grace, He receives us into a state or status of complete filial relationship with Himself and takes no account of anything within us save our need and our will to be saved,—if all this is so, can or will He fail us in what remains, the task and attainment of our actual salvation? The distinction is kept up between our salvation in faith and our salvation in fact, and the argument is that if God so gave Christ objectively to our faith He may be trusted to give Him subjectively in our lives. Whether objectively, however, to our faith or subjectively in our lives, Christ is always one and the same thing—our own divine holiness, righteousness, life. We do not believe in Him at all if we do not believe in Him as all these, not only for us, but in us.

Like a cradle rocking, rocking,
  Silent, peaceful, to and fro,
Like a mother's sweet looks dropping
  On the little face below,
Hangs the green earth, swinging, turning
  Jarless, noiseless, safe and slow;
Falls the light of God's face bending
  Down, and watching us below.

And as feeble babes that suffer,
  Toss and cry, and will not rest,
Are the ones the tender mother
  Holds the closest, loves the best;
So when we are weak and wretched,
  By our sins weighed down, distressed,
Then it is that God's great patience
  Holds us closest, loves us best.

O great heart of God! whose loving
Cannot hindered be nor crossed;
Will not weary, will not even
In our death itself be lost—
Love divine! of such great loving
Only mothers know the cost—
Cost of love which, all love passing,
Gave a Son to save the lost.[1]

4. *The Duration of it.* The proof is one of perpetual validity. The Bible does not say, God commended; it does not say, God has commended; it uses the perpetual present and says, God commendeth. There are some proofs for the being and attributes of God that serve their purpose and then pass away. There are arguments that appeal to us in childhood, but lose their power in our maturer years. And there are proofs that may convince one generation, and yet be of little value to the next; not a few evidences, such as that from design, which were very helpful to the believers of an older school, are well-nigh worthless to their thinking sons, imbued with the teaching of the present day. But there is one argument that stands unshaken through every age and every generation. It is the triumphant argument of the Cross of Christ. Knowledge may widen, thought may deepen, theories may come and go, yet in the very centre, unshaken and unshakable, stands Calvary, the lasting commendation of the love of God. To all the sorrowing and to all the doubting, to all the bitter and to all the eager, to every youthful heart, noble and generous, to every weary heart, burdened and dark, to-day, and here, as nineteen hundred years ago to all like hearts in Rome, "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."[2]

iii. Something Personal.

However clear our views upon this subject, we shall not feel the full force of these considerations until we turn from the race to the individual, from mankind to ourselves in particular, and contemplate each for himself the love of God, as exhibited on the Cross of Christ, as if that love had had no other object. He loved

[1] Saxe Holm, in *Sunday School Times*, xxxv. 20, p. 318.
[2] G. H. Morrison.

me, and gave Himself for me. It is quite true that God's love is as wide as the world, for "God so loved the world"; but it is equally true that it is as narrow as the individual. Wide enough to comprehend all, it is also sufficiently concentrated to apprehend each with its own merciful arrest, laying a strong hand upon our heart, and changing the whole course of our lives with its own mighty power.

¶ Life—our common life—with its discipline of experience, will surely teach us how little, comparatively, upon reason, and how largely, comparatively, upon the heart, depend the issues of living. The most precious things we possess, the highest relationships in which we stand to one another—are they not, one and all of them, bound up with love, which thinks not in the syllogisms of reason, but rather by the tender intuitions of the heart. "We do not prove," says Pascal, "that we ought to be loved, by arranging in order the reasons for love. . . . The way of the heart is different from that of the mind, which is by statement and proof."

The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one;
Yet the light of a whole world dies
With the setting sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

¶ A German student, who had strayed far into doubt and sin, went one day in a fit of desperate levity to see the aged pastor who had been in years past his spiritual guide. "My son," said the saint of God, "tell me your sins, that I may show you how to be delivered from them." Immediately the young man began to recite a shameful list of wrongdoings, and again and again, with passionate emphasis for each sin, pronounced the words: "But I don't care for that." The other listened patiently till he had done, and then quietly asked him to comply with a simple request. "To-night," he said, "and every night when you retire to rest, kneel down and say this: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast died upon the Cross for me, that my sins may be forgiven;—but I don't care for that,' and come back at the end of a week and tell me your sins again." Consent was lightly given, and for three nights the words were said. The fourth saw a penitent, white and

trembling, at the old man's door, asking for admission. "I can't say it, and I *do* care," was his faltering confession. The appeal of the Cross had reached his heart.[1]

O healing Face, unto all men most kind,
Teach me to find Thee, lest I wander blind,
For as the river seeks the sea, and as its rest the rain,
So seeks my face for Thee, so pleads my prayer the pain
That pleads through Thee:
"Behold and see,
Is there a sorrow that has no part in Me?"[2]

[1] F. B. Macnutt. [2] Laurence Housman.

A Good Reckoning.

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A Good Reckoning.

Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.—Rom. vi. 11.

1. St. Paul's object in this chapter is to exhibit the inconsistency of sin with the Christian faith and position. We are, he says, planted together with Christ, or engrafted into Him, and as little as the shoot can bear fruit different from the stalk, so little can we, if faithful to our position, live differently from Christ. We are baptized into His death that we may pass with Him through death into a new life. As interment is the evidence of death, so baptism, in Paul's view, is the outward symbol that we are done with the old life and have entered on the new. When a person is buried, that means that death has taken place; when a person is baptized, that means that death to sin, with Christ and in Christ, has taken place. Paul asserts that in every genuine Christian there is a process going forward parallel to that which our Lord Himself passed through. The outward appearance of Christ's experience may be wholly different from that of His followers, but essentially and inwardly they are precisely the same. For us, as for Him, death to sin results in resurrection to newness of life. We can get to life, Paul would say, only through a genuine death, a death not indeed of the body, but a death as real and generally much more painful.

2. Now, though this is a style of teaching very common with Paul, there are some minds to which it always seems nearly mystical. They are baffled when they strive to bring it into connexion with their own experience. They think Paul speaks as if the process of sanctification worked with mechanical certainty, whereas they find that after believing in Christ they are by no means dead to sin. They cannot make Paul's teaching square with their own experience; it seems to them that the decisive severance from sin which he has in view does never in reality

occur. This disagreement is merely superficial. Paul, in describing the process by which the sinner passed into life, was, of course, compelled to describe the ideal process, and not the actual experience of any single believer. That ideal process may never be actually realized by any one, but it is more or less nearly approached by all. The professor of surgery in describing the actual history of a gunshot wound, from the moment of its infliction, on through treatment and convalescence to perfect health, may describe a process from which each patient finds his own case to differ in certain particulars, but the description remains on that very account a sufficient guide in essentials for all cases; and Paul sufficiently indicates in this very chapter that there is nothing mechanical in his view of salvation. When he says, "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin . . . let not sin reign in your mortal body . . . yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," and so forth, he sufficiently shows that our salvation is in his view not finished and not complete by one act of faith, but is only slowly and painfully accomplished by the constant renewal of spiritual desire and spiritual energy. He appeals to what we all know to be the spring and source of character, the human will.

¶ "Give me first a death in which there is no life, and then a life in which there is no death." He who uttered these words was not a Christian as we count Christian, but he understood the great law which regulates human and Christian life better than many of us Christians do. There is only one kind of perfect human life, and that is the life which is exemplified in Jesus Christ; and to this life there is only one possible path, and that is through a genuine death. The grub cannot pass to the higher life of the dragon-fly without first sickening and becoming dead to all the life it has been familiar with in the water, and we, in order to enter the true eternal life of man, must die to what we have been most familiar with in the old life.[1]

I.

Dead to Sin.

1. To be dead to an object is to be as incapable of being touched, influenced, or affected by it as if we were really dead.

[1] Marcus Dods.

Thus some people are dead to the pleasures of the world—that is, earthly pleasures have no attraction for them; or they are dead to ambition—that is, the honours and dignities of the world are to their minds nothing better than children's toys. And in this way, too, men are often dead to what is good—to truth, to justice, to honour, to duty; they are as insensible to their claims as a dead man would be. And so it is with regard to sin. To be dead to sin is to be insensible to all its temptations; it is to be in that state in which the motions of sin within and the allurements to sin without have no power; it is to be dead to all sinful appetites, passions, desires, thoughts; dead to all sinful objects and aims—in a word, it is to have ceased from sin, as one who is dead has ceased from all living acts.

¶ Being dead *to* sin must obviously be the opposite of being dead *in* sin. The latter must undeniably be a state of entire sinfulness—a state in which the soul is dead to all good through the power of sin over it. But right over against this, to be *dead to sin* must be to be indifferent to its attractiveness—beyond the reach of its influence—as fully removed from its influences as the dead are from the objects of sense in this world. As he who is dead in the natural sense has nothing more to do with earthly things, so he who is dead to sin has nothing to do any more with sin's attractions or with sinning itself.[1]

2. More particularly, St. Paul's expression, "dead to sin," suggests such ideas as these—

(1) We are dead to sin in the sense of being *beyond its power to inflict penalty on us.* He that is dead is freed from sin in that sense. If a servant has come to a settlement with his master there remains no longer any bond between them. Now the wages of sin is death, and our wages have been paid in the death of Christ. That is, roughly, Paul's theology. The law has no claim upon a man who has suffered its extreme penalty, and this the old legal phraseology of Scotland brought out when it spoke of criminals being justified in the Grassmarket, when they were hung there. By death they cleared scores with the law. Thus we have by the death of Christ the removal of our guilt.

(2) To be dead to sin means, further, that we are *irresponsive to the appeals of sin.* How still, how unmoved, how irresponsive the dead are! Let the master shout at his slave's

[1] C. G. Finney.

dead body; not one finger stirs to obey his orders. Let him bring his lash across the upturned face; not a muscle quivers. Was the dead man vain and fond of applause? the acclaims of a world bring no smile of pleasure to his face now. Was he mean, greedy, grasping? tell him of the most promising investments: he has no ear, no heart for them. Fill the dead hand with gold; the fingers will not close upon it. Set round the dead the things that but a few hours ago made his eye glitter and his pulses quicken; now he is beyond them all—dead to them. The soldier who a few months ago sprang forward at the sound of the bugle now lies stiff on the field, and knows no difference between the charge and the retire. The most passionate kiss that love presses on the face of the dead wins no acknowledgment, no returning embrace. As a wild Bechuana said: "Soon I shall be dead, and they will bury me in my field; my flocks will come to pasture above me, but I shall no longer hear them, and I shall not come forth from my tomb to take them and carry them with me to my sepulchre." Such is the image of our life in the midst of the world since we believed in Christ; such is the insensibility of the true Christian, of the man who avails himself of his position; such is his insensibility to the temptations that charmed him in his former years, to all that constituted the very essence of his old life. The man who was led by his appetites, and could not walk the streets without sinning, sets the Cross of Christ before him, and finds he can as little sin as if he were a corpse. The man who lowered his character and lost his self-respect to make a larger profit than was legitimate, carries with him the remembrance of Christ's death, and can as little overreach or swindle as the miser who was buried a century ago. He is dead to the old life; it is a thing of the past; it is not in that direction he looks for happiness, nor from it that appeals have any effect.

¶ It is in Christ Himself that we see what complete death to sin means. To the most subtle and enticing allurements that this world, and the varying exigencies of a most complicated life in this world, could present, He was simply dead. How vain to offer Him, after He was risen, any prizes of this world! How absolutely irrelevant and pointless any such offer or any such temptations appear! How insignificant, how paltry, how past and done with, do all the gaieties, the affections, the dangers, the prizes of this life seem in the light of that new life. And it is

that new life, it is that risen life of Christ, we are to share in now; and we are to learn to be, and actually to be, as superior to temptation, as dead to sin, as He was. We are to keep impressing on ourselves that we belong to another world—"Reckon ye yourselves to be dead to sin." We are to keep impressing on ourselves that it is not in the ways of this world that we are to attain our ends, that we have an inheritance above, and it is through real sympathy with Christ Himself that we can alone reach this position.[1]

(3) Again, to be dead to sin implies not only a complete but *a final severance* from it. Death is a state from which no one returns to the old life. When death comes there is at once and for ever an end of what has been. So must it be with our severance from sin; so, one is tempted to say, it was with Paul himself, who realized his position in Christ. But so it is not always. There are animals which hibernate, and for months seem to be dead; there are animals which become torpid, and for all practical purposes are dead for a season; they do no mischief, they cease to be a terror to their natural prey, they entirely abandon their customary haunts and habits; but when the warmth of spring penetrates to their temporary burying-place there is a revival of their old instincts, energies, and habits.

¶ With many persons the abandonment of sin is a mere hibernation, not a death. For awhile they seem to have lost all taste for their old ways; temptations which before were irresistible now flit past them and attract no notice, cause no movement; for awhile, in the ardour of a newly conceived idea of life, the man is impregnable to all that would lead him from it. He is wrapped up in his new and strong resolve, and while that lasts he is insensible to the storms that would drive him from his path. Or something has made the world cold, distasteful to a man; his love of it has got a chill; his investments have not turned out well; his prospects in life have become contracted or have been blighted, and he withdraws from his former keen engagement in this world's affairs. Or there comes to the man of pleasure or to the sensualist higher and better impulses; the Spirit of Christ inwardly solicits him and strives with him, or some outward event warns and admonishes him, and for the present he becomes dead to the solicitations of appetite. Or a young person comes under the influence of some older and stronger character, of some one who does live a consecrated, unselfish, Christlike life; the influence is

[1] Marcus Dods.

commanding while it lasts, but when it is removed it becomes apparent that it was merely a mesmeric state, which had produced not a real death, not a final separation from old weaknesses and habits. And so with all those temporary abandonments of sin; they are mere swoons or fits, or sleeps, or states of torpor; the soul of sin lives on securely underneath the insensible lethargic surface, and, when the period of slumber passes and the cause of insensibility has exhausted itself, will return again with renewed and stronger life to all its old habits and ways—a most melancholy, most discouraging, but most common spectacle.

II.

Alive to God.

1. This is the other aspect of our participation in Christ, and it is even more important than the death to sin. To die to sin is but the necessary preliminary to the new life. By itself it is incomplete and ineffective. It is not death that can ever be in any form a desirable state, but only life, fulness of life, and it is because death of this kind promises fuller life that we pass through it. Some persons, however, are dead to sin, but they are dead to everything else. Religion, instead of enlivening and enlarging and inspiring them, seems to have benumbed and deadened them all round; they would be larger and better men if they had no religion at all. For all the active good they do they might as well be in the grave. The poor man who needs help would as soon think of knocking at a tombstone as of knocking at their door; active beneficence on their part would startle us as if the sheeted dead had come to our aid. Where there is fulness of life there is activity, joy, love, intensity; not coldness, selfish caution, parsimony, retirement, and seclusion from the woes, the wounds, the joys, the interests of men. And where there is life it will appear; burying the seed beneath the clod, the life that is in it will work its way through, and show what it is. The body of Christ could not be held under the power of death, and if the spirit of life that was in Him be really in us, that life will break through all that overlies it and will appear.

¶ Do not try to live neither for sin nor for God. Engage at once in the spiritual and heavenly life, the life that is for God. To be dead is to be miserable, nay, it is worse, it is on the road to

dissolution, and the reason why Christian society is so unattractive, so feeble, so disappointing, is that so many of us are content to be dead to the old sins, but without any activities that make room for themselves in the world around us, and carry a blessing with them. Take note that if you do not fill your life with Christian activities, and your heart with Christian joys, they will soon be filled and flooded with the old life; commit yourself quickly to the new life, making its joys, its hopes, its privileges, its views, its ways yours; give yourself fairly, speedily, and in very truth to the risen life, to that life that is in thorough sympathy with Christ. Be strenuous and abundant in expressions of this risen and heavenly life, or there is small hope for you. Do not make it needful that men should feel your pulse, or hold a mirror to your mouth to see if you be really alive; but let it be seen by the brightness of your vision, by the activity of your step, by the force and helpfulness of your hand, that you have a more abundant life.[1]

2. When is a man alive to God?

(1) When he fully recognizes the signs of the presence of God. That man is "alive to God" who habitually realizes the divine presence, to whom God is not a *theory* by which he can conveniently account for the universe, or a *name* for certain human conceptions of nature and its working, or a *principle* which deserves investigation when life's hard work is over, or an *invention* of priestcraft to terrify and scare the soul, or a philosophic *concept*, the presence or absence of which has little to do with life or happiness, but the great and only reality, the prime and principal element of all his thoughts. He has learned from nobler sources than the pure reason, or the trembling conscience, or the widespread activities of power, his estimate of the character of God. He has been to the Cross of Christ and there comprehended the righteousness and the love of God, and he has gone back into the great region of conscience, of reason, and of nature, with the lesson he has learned *there*, and can compel the cold impassive laws to murmur to him of pity, and teach conscience to be at peace with a higher revelation than that of law: and while his reason exults in God, who is *one* and not two, he spreads out the ineffable love over the universal wisdom; he feels that the justice and the mercy of God are two manifestations of the same

[1] Marcus Dods.

God; he adores the compassion and exults in the grace of God, while he bows before His unsullied and eternal Majesty.

(2) Again, a man is alive to God when the sense of the divine presence awakens all his energies and engages all his faculties. Conscious of the divine presence, he renders to Him into whose presence he is brought the appropriate homage of his entire being. Then every place is a temple, every act is a sacrifice, every sin the pollution of a sacred place, the defilement of a holy day. No praise that he can render can ever equal the demand of conscience, nor will his actual obedience ever realise the ideal he has formed of consecration to Him. It is morally impossible for one who is alive unto God to imagine that he is doing too much to express his sense of reverence, gratitude, or obligation. He can hold back no faculty, no affection, no treasure, saying, "This is mine and may be appropriated to my own ends." The "faculty" is God's own gift—nay, rather, God's own power working through the human will; the "affection" is a divine incentive meant to reveal the God of love, and must not be made a rival to Him who gave the power to love and the object to be loved; while on every one of his "treasures" he has learned to write, "Holiness unto the Lord"—"bought with a price." In one word, self is subdued to Him, and human will is lost in God's.

(3) If a man is alive unto God, he will not only realize the divine presence, and feel the claim made by the divine Being upon every faculty of his nature, but he will find his highest desires gratified. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." If we are alive unto God, we shall find that we are following the bent of our true nature. We shall fear an inward contradiction and antagonism of our nature to God far more than the crucifixion of our passions. He that drinketh of the water given him by Christ shall never thirst after those draughts of carnal pleasure to be found in the broken cisterns of human invention, and it shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

¶ A lady came to me in Japan last summer, and said, "I am a missionary here, and have come to make a sad confession to you. I have come to tell you this—that though I came out from America to teach the people here in Japan, I have never had a single hour of joy in my Christian life. And," she said, "I feel so ashamed of it. Can you tell me the secret of joy? Can you

tell me how to get some gladness into my life? I feel that I cannot commend the religion of Jesus Christ to people, while I have a joyless experience." I said, "I do not know any secret of joy like this—I am alive in the risen, victorious, indissoluble life of my risen Lord. The glory of that Easter morning is mine. Why, I cannot think of that for five minutes without being glad, without saying good-bye to sorrow and sighing."[1]

¶ That manly Christian, that stalwart teacher, Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, tells us that, towards the end of his life, he began to ask God to forgive something for which he had never asked forgiveness before. He asked God to forgive him for the sin of gloom. He felt that his face had been gloomy, and that his voice had been gloomy; and he wanted forgiveness for the gloom that had overshadowed his life. You remember what happened. On one Easter morning, as he was getting ready for the Easter Day services, there flashed upon him, with a new meaning, the thought—Jesus Christ is alive! He walked up and down his study, and said, "Jesus Christ is alive!" And, in the glory of that risen life, he went to preach; and his sun nevermore went down. In the gladness of that resurrection vision, in the glory of that Easter morning, he lived, and his congregation sang every Sabbath morning the Easter hymn, "Christ the Lord is risen today, Hallelujah."

Buried with Christ, and raised with Him too,
What is there left for me to do?
Simply to cease from struggling and strife,
Simply to walk in newness of life.
Glory be to God.

III.

In Christ Jesus.

St. Paul describes both the death to sin and the life to God as "in Christ Jesus." In Christ's death we died—in Christ's resurrection we rose again to newness of life. It is by contemplating Christ as dying in our room, and as thereby suffering the punishment due to our sins, that we come to reckon ourselves as dead unto sin—to look upon all sin as that with which we should now have nothing to do—which belongs to a former condition of things that has passed away—the gulf of death

[1] J. Gregory Mantle.

having intervened—and which, whenever doubts appear, should be looked upon with surprise and alarm as a message from the dead, to be immediately dismissed. It is by thus looking upon Christ, as dying that we might live, and as rising again for our justification, that we should be led to reckon ourselves as exempted from death and all its consequences—as restored to the enjoyment of that life, which we had forfeited, with all its privileges—and as thus bound by the most solemn obligations to devote it to Him who looked upon us in our low and lost estate, and who sent forth His only-begotten Son to die in our room.

1. *The death to sin is in Christ Jesus.* By the cross of Christ, says the Apostle, "the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world"; "I am crucified with Christ"; "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." We are "buried with him by baptism into death." The thought often recurs that our faith in Him nails our own hands to the cursed tree, closes and films our eye on worldly pageant and glory, crowns us with thorns, exposes us to contumely and shame, makes us the butt of devilish malice, taunts our agony with a cup which we cannot drink, buries us away out of sight of the world, rolls a stone to the door of our sepulchre, shuts us up in darkness, makes us see to the uttermost the misery, the shame, the cowardice, the miscreant humour, the curses, the consequences, the wages of sin. If we have taken up this thought, not only into our intellects, but into our entire spiritual nature so that it has entered into the very essence of our being, that "Christ died for our sins," then we are dead. We have gone through the shame and humiliation of His death.

¶ As we become alive to what the death of Christ really is and means, how it prepares the only way by which a new life could enter our race, and a new spirit be given to transgressors; by which God could justify the ungodly, and still be just: as all this, and very much more than this, is partially felt by the simplest mind when it "closes with Christ" (as the old divines expressively said), it is not difficult to understand that faith in Christ, that union to Christ, involves dying with Christ to sin; that it involves our being crucified and buried with Christ; that it is the mortification of sin, the sharing of His agony, and the participation of the soul in His death. "They that are Christ's

have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." A true and deep faith in Christ, a recognition by mind and heart of the work of Christ, is such an intuition of law, such a sense of God, such a revelation of the evil of sin, such a burning of the heart against self and the flesh, and the world and the devil, that the Apostle was justified in saying, that through faith in Christ our Lord, Roman Christians might reckon themselves dead unto sin.[1]

¶ When Jesus Christ died, every member of His body died too. That follows logically. His hands, His feet, His head, were all dead. Hence, if you are a member of Jesus Christ spiritually, when Jesus Christ died you died too. That is what St. Paul is arguing. It is because of your union with Him, as a living newborn soul, that you look back upon His death and say, "I have died." A friend of mine, who is a missionary, had once witnessed a public flogging, and he turned to his wife and said: "That man committed a theft with his hands. How was it then that his back was flogged?" She saw what he was aiming at, and said: "I think, John, it is the union that does it." Precisely. How is it that you suffer with Jesus Christ, the Head? It is the union that does it. And in Jesus Christ's death, I who have thought that I was alive, if I will begin where St. Paul begins, will say, "I died too." That is the first great fundamental point. Our old man was crucified when Christ was crucified.[2]

2. *The life to God is in Christ Jesus.* This is more obvious, for—

(1) Christ is the revelation of the Father, the organ and chief minister of God; the highest manifestation of the righteousness, of the mercy, of the wisdom and truth of God. By faith in Him we have the highest opportunities for the recognition of the character and nature of God. Christ is not a rival to the God of nature and providence; if He were so, if the Christian consciousness had made of Him a second God, if the Catholic Church had suffered the Gnostic schism in the Divine manifestation and attributes to have stolen into its creed, if the Arian delusion had not been driven off from the Church by deeper views of both God and man, the language of the text would have been very perplexing. As it is, Christ is no rival to God. The Divine element in the Christ is the eternal Son of God; the whole of the Divine nature manifests itself to us under the aspect of the

[1] H. R. Reynolds. [2] H. C. Loes.

eternal Son. God is manifest therefore in the flesh. The Word that is God has been incarnate, and "we have beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we are alive to God, because it is in Him that we can "see the Father," and because "no man knoweth the Son but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."

(2) Faith in Christ is, further, a resurrection with Christ from the death to sin. The illustrations which Paul draws from the resurrection of Christ to throw light on our divine life are very numerous. The new life of the soul is a resurrection-life, charged with all the associations and aspirations which would be possessed by one who had passed, through dying, from death to life.

(3) The life *to* God flows out of the life *of* God in the soul. It cannot be that the life of the soul will be characterized by deep perceptions of God, that the delighting in God, resting in God, hoping in God, will be the characteristics of the human spirit, unless God Himself create within us the new life by His Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the dispensation of the exalted Christ. The new germ of life in our humanity is planted there by the risen Jesus. The new vision of God is the work of Him who is the life of our life, the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever.

IV

Reckoning.

When the Apostle bids us reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God, of course he is telling us to reckon ourselves to be what we really are—not something different from what we are. It is not that we are to suppose or imagine ourselves to be dead to sin in some figurative or fictitious sense, but that being so, we are to recognize the truth, and make it a conviction. If we are not dead to sin and alive to God, there would be absolutely no meaning at all in this precept and no possible effect from it.

¶ You could not say to a blind man, "Reckon yourself to be one possessed of sight"; or to a paralysed man, "Reckon yourself to have the use of your limbs"; or to an ignorant man, "Reckon

yourself to be learned." A man must possess sight before he can consider himself able to see, and he must have the use of his limbs in order to count on being able to move, and he must have wealth or knowledge if he is to reckon on using either. It would be not only ineffectual and senseless, but a cruel mockery to call upon any one to exercise gifts or powers which they did not possess, or were incapable of exercising.

¶ Why am I authorized to reckon on these glorious facts? Simply because God does it. God reckons me to have died with Christ, and I am going to reckon myself to be where God reckons me. God reckons me to be living in Christ, and I am going to reckon myself to be living in Christ. The word in the Book of Genesis about Abraham is this—not "Abraham believed God," but "Abraham *amened* God." He staggered not at the promise, through unbelief, but said "Amen" to it. It seems akin to madness for you to reckon yourself dead to the foul things in your life that have mastered you a hundred times, so that you continue under an overwhelming sense of defeat. Say "Amen" to God. Then God will honour your faith and make victory real in your life, and your Amen to God will please Him as Abraham's did, for God was so pleased with Abraham's Amen that He counted it to him for righteousness.[1]

1. *It is an exercise of the Imagination.* The imagination is the faculty by means of which we perceive the facts of life and apply them to our lives. "Reckon yourselves dead," "reckon yourselves alive"; in other words, be convinced of it, and you will be it. It is a significant anticipation of the method adopted by those who call themselves Christian Scientists in their attempts to heal the body. It is what is called "Auto-suggestion," namely, a strong, purposeful denial of one set of experiences and phenomena, and an equally strong affirmation of others, and the anticipation that the series thus denied will wither, as a plant withers when deprived of water.

¶ There is little doubt that the principle of auto-suggestion is rapidly being recognized on the physical plane in the sphere of the influence of mind over body. On this plane the principle works both ways—both for disease and for health; the mind, dwelling constantly on particular symptoms of disease, renders the body liable to be affected by that disease. In an obituary notice in the *Lancet* of a great nerve doctor, who died from paralysis, this is practically acknowledged, for we read: "It is re-

[1] J. Gregory Mantle.

markable that he wrote much about diseases of the nervous system, thus giving another example of the curious coincidence that not infrequently medical men die of the diseases to which they have given special attention." It certainly tells for health. In spite of many failures, and premises that, in my opinion, are erroneous, and an exaggeration of the matter-denying philosophy of Berkeley, the so-called Christian Scientists may fairly claim to have established the principle that the sphere of causes is the mind. Their council to their disciples is: "Ally yourself in thought with the resistless Divine life within you as the one true fact of your being. Obliterate the obstructions of doubt and fear, that the Divine force within may have scope to work; 'reckon yourself dead' to all the illusions of the false self; 'reckon yourself alive' to all the elements of health and power, and strength, and perfection, and this mental process will result in change throughout the whole physical frame." And it certainly does, and in numerous instances, to some of which I am able to testify from personal observation, the result is the cure of disease. It is almost a matter of surprise, considering the training of the man in the strictest sect of the Pharisees, to note the strong grasp of spiritual intuition with which this truth—known to the Easterns 2000 years B.C.—is adopted by St. Paul, and applied to the Divinely ordered method of spiritual growth. "Reckon yourself dead to sin—reckon yourself alive to God." The road to a true and noble life, he would say, is the intense, purposeful focusing of your mental faculties upon all that is high, noble, pure, Divine, and the deliberate, persistent ignoring, denying, all that contradicts it. The seed of action is impulse. Meet the impulses within you on their own ground—where you find them. They are all in the mental region—think yourself into God—reckon yourself alive to God.[1]

¶ There is a pathetic story of a slave who was put up for auction at a slave-mart. A kind-hearted man in the crowd paid the price and gave him his freedom; but the iron of slavery had entered his soul, and he could not divest himself of the mental habit of a slave. He failed to imagine the change in his position, and so he went back to his squalid hut, took up the hoe, and resumed his old place in the slave-gang. He could not imagine anything so good, and until he could, he was not free. There are thousands like him, slaves because the imagination is enslaved, in bondage to habit, to vice; and they might be free if only it could be brought home to the imagination. It is not money that delivers: it is the imagination.[2]

[1] Canon B. Wilberforce. [2] W. G. Stooke.

2. But, more biblically and more accurately, *it is an exercise of Faith.* It will be observed that the starting-point in these verses is not something at which we are to aim, but *a fact which has already happened,* and which is stated to us on authority. Over and over again it is repeated that we *have* died; that we *are* dead; that we died when Christ died; and that we died *with* Him. This is a matter of *revelation* and of *fact* for every Christian Upon this is built a primary duty—the duty of believing it, because Scripture says that it is true. It is a subject for faith. Why is it that we do not get the better of our sins? Why do the best of us make so little progress in practical obedience? Why are some living in a constant succession of failures, so that they seem never to improve? Why are others living to the present world, or living in sin? There is one cause of this common to every case alike—*want of faith.* We do not advance because we want faith; we lead careless, ungodly, sinful lives, because we want faith. We do not believe in Christ's work. We languidly believe in what He once did *for* us—that He died for our sins upon the Cross, and rose again; and we believe in what He is ready and willing to do for us—that He is ready to help us now if we seek Him; but we do not believe in what He has done *in* us—in that great and real work which He did once actually accomplish upon our individual nature; we do not believe that we are now, or ever were, truly dead to sin; we have not faith in this great fact; and this is what St. Paul bids us believe—believe now, and believe at all times. Let us reckon by faith that in Christ Jesus we are both dead to sin and alive to God.

(1) Let us reckon on the *fact.* For in that He died to sin we died to sin. Notice the use of the word *with* by St. Paul. In verse 6, "Crucified *with* him"; in verse 8, "Dead *with* him"; in verse 4, "Buried *with* him"; in verse 8, "Live *with* him." Crucified with Him, dead with Him, buried with Him, living with Him; identification in crucifixion, in death, in burial, in resurrection. And if we are to rest our faith unwaveringly, without any hesitancy, upon this great fact, we must remind ourselves once again that it is gloriously true that "our old man," that is, our fallen, unregenerate nature, not as God created it, but as sin defaced and defiled it, "our old man" was crucified with Christ, that the "body of sin"—so called because every part of our

being has been corrupted by sin—might be done away or abolished.

(2) Let us reckon on the *fellowship*. Notice how the Apostle insists upon that, in this chapter. He says, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "If we be dead with Christ" (verse 8), "we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead." What a wonderful argument that is at the close of chapter v., that magnificent contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam! Every living soul is identified either with the first Adam or with the last Adam.

(3) Let us reckon on the *continuity* of the death and life. "In that he died, he died unto sin once for all" (notice the addition of these two words, "for all," in the margin of the Revised Version), "but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." Is there not need to emphasize the continuity of this resurrection life?

¶ I have been disheartened, at times, when I have gone back to some place where there has been a gracious visitation of the Spirit of God, and many men and women have, by faith, identified themselves with Christ, in His death and risen life. It has been a great discouragement to me to find that they have gone back; and that, when I have gone to the place again, they have had to renew this great act of identification with Him.[1]

¶ An old divine says: "A sheep and a sow may each fall into the same quagmire; but the sow will wallow in it, whilst the sheep will bleat piteously, until she is extricated and cleansed." Such is the difference between the ungodly and the children of God. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not"; that is, sin can never become his normal and habitual state.[2]

[1] J. Gregory Mantle. [2] F. B. Meyer.

The Wages and the Gift.

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The Wages and the Gift.

For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Rom. vi. 23.

1. The whole Gospel is summed up in this contrast. What we are by nature; what we should have come to, if we had been let alone; what we shall come to if we let ourselves alone: on the other hand, what we are by grace; what God has done for us, and in whom; and where it is to be sought, and how it may be found: all these things are contained in this brief verse.

2. Paul delights in contrasts. In these words there are three contrasts, and these may be looked at briefly in the light in which modern thought more clearly displays them.

(1) There is a Contrast of Character—God and Sin. While in the preceding passage Paul has personified sin and righteousness, he here retains only the personification of sin, and gives us, instead of the personification of righteousness, a personality. This is significant. Although the writers of the New Testament do recognize and assert the existence and the activity of a personality whose being and whose work is wholly evil, yet it would be the contradiction of a theistic position consistent with itself to contrast God and Satan in a passage such as this. The ideal of righteousness is necessarily and eternally personal. But as evil has no ideal, so it is the negation and extinction of personality. As Lotze has truly and nobly argued, God alone is perfect personality; and men become truly and fully personalities as they approach to God. Personality is self-consciousness, self-control, and self-completeness; and good alone can have these marks. Evil constant, consistent, complete, is deception, division, and despair; and the being in whom evil is altogether divorced from good must be impersonal. It may have intelligence, desire, and purpose of a sort, but not such as constitute true personality.

Accordingly, although it would be an anachronism to ascribe to Paul any such reasoning, yet it is very significant that here he does not contrast God and Satan, a contrast that would have been rhetorically more complete, but doctrinally less comprehensible.

(2) There is a Contrast of Connexion—Wages and Gift. The former term suggests desert, necessity, inevitableness; the latter generosity, spontaneity, initiative. Sin's result is according to law: God's act is of grace. The death in which bad men find their desert is necessary, inevitable, under moral law; but the life wherewith good men are blessed is not the wages of their goodness, but a generous and spontaneous expression of God's grace. Man's conscience does undoubtedly testify that there is this necessary and inevitable connexion between sin and death; and man's religious consciousness as clearly testifies that it is no necessary, inevitable consequence of his deeds that brings the good man perfection and blessedness. The ethical inquiry of the present century confirms the Apostle's conviction of the inevitableness of the consequences of sin. Modern fiction lays stress on hereditary transmission of evil, on the fixity of evil habits, on the certainty of social retribution, and the irresistible and inevitable process of moral deterioration. Then, on the other hand, more cautious thinkers and exponents of the evolutionary process are led to recognize that the higher stages are inexplicable by the lower. Matter does not account for life, nor life for mind. Progress demands at various stages a divine initiative. This is what religious experience lays stress upon. The higher life of perfection and blessedness is not explicable by man's intellectual, emotional, moral faculties and attainments. It is the gift of God. This stage in man's progress demands a divine initiative to explain and account for it. Thus the process of moral deterioration does not demand the divine intervention, does not require for its explanation a personal action; whereas the progress of moral development does demand the divine initiative, is explicable only as the act of God.

(3) There is a Contrast of Condition—Life and Death. This contrast is not merely in the physical sphere; eternal life and eternal death do include physical life and physical death, but their significance is not exhausted thereby. To those who believe that the physical is but preparatory for, symbolical of, the

spiritual, there will be no difficulty in realizing and asserting that physical life and physical death are spiritually significant, prophetic, and interpretative. But the physical is only of subordinate significance. The essential characteristics of eternal life and eternal death are spiritual. And here religious thought is richly illustrated, and assuredly confirmed, by biological research. We are learning constantly that the disuse or abuse of any organ results in its deterioration, and finally in its, if not total extinction, yet reduction to impotent, rudimentary form; while the exercise of an organ is the condition of its development. Eternal death may then be regarded as the atrophy or abortion of man's spiritual faculties; while eternal life is their development in perfection by their normal exercise. Thus the thought of the Apostle is no rhetorical conclusion of an argument, but is a truth that is being proved, by the advance of man's knowledge and the growth of his thought, ever more significant and valid.

I.

The Wages of Sin is Death.

i. Wages.

1. The word here rendered "wages" is the same as is used in Scripture for a soldier's pay. "Be content with your wages" (Luke iii. 14), was the charge of John the Baptist to the soldiers who asked of him their duty. "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own wages?" (1 Cor. ix. 7), that is, for pay furnished by himself, was St. Paul's question to those who would grudge to a minister of the Gospel his right to "live of the Gospel." But, whether in its application to the pay of a soldier or to the wages of a servant, the whole point of the expression lies in this, that certain work done has a right to certain remuneration.

Love wore a threadbare dress of grey
And toiled upon the road all day.

Love wielded pick and carried pack
And bent to heavy loads the back.

Though meagre fed and sorely tasked,
One only wage love ever asked—

A child's white face to kiss at night,
A woman's smile by candlelight.

This is wages—the wages of love. The wages of sin, in like manner, will be the remuneration which sin gives for work done in its service.

2. Sin is an employer of labour—the most extensive employer which the world contains. He pays wages, is bound by strong law to pay wages, to every one who works for him. It is true he does not pay in full as the work goes on. He does not clear off the whole debt, as it stands, at the end of the week or month or year. The kind of wages is unfavourable to this. Nevertheless, employer and employed are strictly upon the wages system. Every hour of labour becomes a debt of the master, and is kept record of, and will be recompensed by him in due course if the system holds as between the worker and him. He means to be just; he has no thought of evading the wages law. But he only pays enough, meanwhile, to assert the principle of connexion between his servants and him—small instalments, petty sums of earnest-money, which are of the nature of wages, and are part of the wages—till all the work is done. Done? Well; when the earthly phase of the bargain has passed, when the sun of mortal life has set and the night of the day of time has come, he then reckons with his workers.

¶ A certain tyrant sent for one of his subjects, and said to him, "What is your employment?" He said, "I am a blacksmith." "Go home, and make me a chain of such a length." He went home: it occupied him several months; and he had no wages all the time he was making it. Then he brought it to the monarch, who said, "Go and make it twice as long." He brought it up again; and the monarch said, "Go and make it longer still." Each time he brought it, there was nothing but the command to make it longer still; and, when he brought it back at last, the monarch said, "Take it, and bind him hand and foot with it, and cast him into the furnace of fire." These were the wages of making the chain.[1]

3. But the very instalments Sin pays even now—do these

[1] D. L. Moody.

convey no hint of the kind of recompense he engages to give in the end? What is he openly paying at this hour? When he is generous in his present payments, it is no winsome recompense that goes from his hand; it is disorder, loss, calamity, disease, sorrow, fear, discontent, hatred, treachery, remorse, rapid running down of moral tone. Even when he is least profuse in his present payments, what are his workers receiving?—uneasy forebodings of the future, unanswered achings of the soul, mockings of the spirit with the chaff of sense and time, the heart shut dark against the sunshine of God's fatherliness.

¶ Shall I ever forget a visit which I paid to a drunkard's home, a man who had sunk from an honourable position in the State and the Church? There he was, a wreck of his former self. In vain I pleaded with him to give up the drink. "No," he said, "not if it means hell." "I cannot," he added, "I have not the power. I am not my own master." As I entreated him to be manly, to put his trust in God, and seek to conquer his passion, his daughter entered the room—a beautiful girl. "Man," I said, "you are a coward. If you will not give up drink for your own sake, give it up for your child's." "I cannot," he answered, "I cannot." As I left him I realized the truth of the Apostle's words, "The wages of sin is death," and resolved, by God's grace, to speak without fear concerning the power and penalty of evil.[1]

ii. Sin.

1. Sin is a word of wide import. We can all assent to the truth of the statement before us, if it be restricted to the case of great excesses of wrongdoing; to the case of the dishonest, the intemperate, the grossly profligate, who reap the fruit of their evil deeds in bodily disease or in civil punishment. Great cause indeed have such persons to say to themselves, "In serving Sin, I have served a very just master." For each one of my dishonest acts, for each one of my sinful lusts, Sin, my master, has given me a definite and a very exact equivalent. I squandered my money in riotous living, and I have come to penury. I neglected my health, I despised the warning of the physician, I deemed myself exempted from the common conditions of the bodily frame; and I am now a wreck of what I was, every organ disarranged, and my whole existence a burden and a curse.

[1] C. E. Walters.

2. But, though less obviously, it is not less really true, in reference to cases far short of criminal excess. We see it in the way in which Sin pays in kind. A man neglects prayer, neglects his Bible, neglects the Sunday, once: that is sin; it is a contradiction of the known will of God. He supposes himself free to resume any of these intermitted habits when he will: he is his own master, he thinks, and what he has to-day willed one way, he may to-morrow will the other. But Sin is standing over him, and mocking his vain calculations. He has done a piece of work for Sin to-day, and Sin will pay him his wages in inclining him to do the same to-morrow. To-morrow the voice of inclination will be stronger and the voice of conscience weaker, and thus he will do again as he has done once, and find it far less difficult and at the time feel far less remorseful.

3. Paul does not say, the wages of great sins, or the wages of some sins, or the wages of certain sins; he simply says: "*The wages of sin*," of any sin, of all sins, of the least sin, "*is death*." A single sin, however insignificant it may appear, brings guilt of death; as St. James writes: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The man who has broken one link in the chain of the commandments is guilty of breaking the chain.

¶ I was in the offices of the Southern Pacific Railway in San Francisco, when the General Passenger Agent asked me if I had seen the big trees of California. I informed him that I had seen them as I looked from the car window the day before, and smiling he said, "Then you have not seen them, for they must be studied to be appreciated." Calling for his secretary, he stretched out before me a measuring line. On the one side was his affidavit in which he said, "I have measured one of the big trees of California. Its circumference is 105 feet, its diameter 35 feet, and the height was to me so amazing that I hesitate here even to suggest it." Then he said to me, "How large would you think the seed of a big tree might be?" and when I suggested that it ought to be of enormous size, he poured out into the palm of his hand a number of these little seeds, and they were smaller than a lettuce seed. So it is with sin. An evil imagination encouraged, an impure thought harboured, an unholy ambition controlling us, and the work is begun, but the end no human tongue is able to describe.[1]

[1] J. W. Chapman.

iii. Death.

1. "The wages of sin is death." This is true in every sense in which the word death is used in Scripture.

(1) It is true of natural death. Though not the wages of individual sin in all who undergo it, yet even natural death, the death of the body, is the consequence of sin. But for sin, there would not have been death, at any rate as we are acquainted with it. Every funeral which passes us in our streets, every loss which occurs in our families, should remind us of sin; and, though it be not the punishment of the particular sin of him who dies, yet it should awaken in our hearts the remembrance of sin generally, and of our own individual participation in that universal defilement.

(2) But natural death is the least part of sin's wages. Natural death, if that were all, might be for us, as it has been, we believe, for countless thousands, the gate of life. It is otherwise with the second kind of death, spiritual death; the death of the soul. If the life of the soul be union with God, the death of the soul is separation from God.

(3) The full payment is a third kind of death mentioned in Scripture; what is there called *the second death* (Rev. ii. 11, xx. 6, 14, xxi. 8). It would be presumptuous, as well as most painful, to dilate upon that which is thus described. But many hold that it is the consummation, the certain and inevitable consummation, of a life spent on earth either in sin or without God; the state into which entrance is given by the reunion of a dead soul with its reanimated body; the state of one who would not have God for his Father, and died in that refusal, and whose day of grace has at last issued in darkness.

¶ We know but little of the meaning which must fill this word so full of all that is calamitous. Our minds cannot compass the dark dimensions of the word as they appear to the omniscient Mind who here and elsewhere gives abundant sanction to its use as a vivid figure of speech. For we may need to remember that the death of what is mortal (as we say) is scarcely more than the metaphor of Death—is little else than the most fitting symbol of Death, the most characteristic step in the dreary march of Death, that our ignorance permits us to know. And we see that this death of what is mortal, this mere symbol, is the most terrible thing within our earthly experience. We acknowledge it

to be the thing which casts the deepest of all our shadows. We can tell that the gloom of this shadow is a gloom of tears, of unavailing prayers, of bitter partings, of a confronting universe of mysteries and dreads. We can recall the shock which thrills us like an earthquake when it leaps with sudden grasp upon a brother-man at our side. And when it approaches with slowest step, it seems to leave the prints of its feet upon our memories as if it had trodden over them with brandings of fire:—the chamber of hushed voices and anxious ministries, the nights of watching, the pain you cannot soothe, the conflict you can only witness, the closed eyes from which the light has gone out, the wending funeral, the stricken home. Such are the marks of death, as it is known even to the living.[1]

2. To make the antithesis in this verse more striking and evident, St. Paul has left out the verb in each clause of it. Perhaps you may think that if our translators supplied a verb, they might as well have put it in the future tense as in the present. They might have said, "The wages of Sin *will be* Death," not "is Death." "The gift of God *will be* Life," not "is Life." I suspect they were quite right. They would have destroyed the force of the words, and their connexion with those which precede them, if they had given this form to their version. And what is more, they would have destroyed the connexion between the Apostle's language and our own daily experience. St. Paul is not telling us of some time when the Righteous God will call us to account for the sins which we have committed, and will inflict death as the punishment of them. He is contemplating the subject from a point of view altogether different. He says that every man has two masters, either of whom he may serve, but one of whom he must serve. He may be the servant of Sin; then he must take its wages. They are slavery and death. He may be the servant of Righteousness; then he will have all the freedom, energy, life, he is capable of.[2]

¶ Again and again, in my ministry, I have witnessed the misery which comes to the mere pleasure-seeker, to those who sow their wild oats and reap a terrible harvest. With all the strength God has given me I warn the young men and women who are listening to me, against making pleasure their god. As I speak, there comes to me the memory of one of the world's victims, whom by God's grace I was able to help. I happened to be

[1] J. A. Kerr Bain. [2] F. D. Maurice.

preaching in one of the halls of the West London Mission, when I was impressed by the sad and cynical face of a young man in my congregation. At the close of the service, I made my way to the door, determining, if possible, to speak to him. When I did so, he answered me somewhat rudely. I told him I was glad he was at the service. "I didn't come here to listen to you preaching," was the answer. "I came because it was raining." "Oh," I said, "I don't mind why you came." "If you knew the kind of fellow I am," said he, "you would kick me out of the hall." "No," I answered, "we do not usually dismiss the congregation in that fashion." The hardened look went. My words had not failed. He came into my private room and told me a pitiable story. The son of godly parents, he had come to London, like so many, determined, above all else, to enjoy himself. He had indulged in pleasure of the lowest kind. He was shattered in mind and body. "Don't talk to me about hell," he said, "I have been there." And he was only twenty-three years of age.[1]

II.

The Free Gift of God is Eternal Life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

i. Free Gift.

1. God does not give wages. He gives something far better: for who has made God his debtor? When we have done all that is commanded us—and when will that be, for any man?—at last we must say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do (Luke xvii. 10). God has a right to our entire obedience: if ever it were entire, still there would be nothing over; no room for claims of merit, or for rewards of extra service.

2. Just in the same way as Paul, who had no other means of support, was compelled, like most of us, to earn a wage if he was to live, so the soul by nature is compelled, for lack of spiritual resource, to serve sin, for its wage of death. Man must serve; his only choice being which of two masters he will serve, Satan or God—sin or righteousness—he cannot serve both, as is plainly taught throughout this sixth chapter of Romans. And just as

[1] C. E. Walters.

the loving gift of the Philippians released Paul from this necessity to work for the tent-maker's wage, and set him at liberty to give himself up entirely to the preaching of the Gospel, so acceptance by man of the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus, which God freely offers to all, alone liberates him from the bondage of serving sin, and, at the same time, gives him strength to serve God, wherever he goes, by preaching the Gospel from the living epistle of a regenerate life.

3. The word used by the Apostle (*charisma*) means more than "gift"; every gift is not a *charisma*; a *charisma* is a "free gift," a "gift of grace," a gift in which all merit on the part of the receiver is unthought of, and only the free, spontaneous love of the giver is revealed. And it is so, Paul declares, that the eternal life, "the life which is life indeed," comes from God to man. The Gospel was to Paul—to borrow a convenient distinction—not good advice, but good news; it told, first of all, not of something to do, but of something done. No word indicates more clearly the whole drift of Paul's thinking on this matter than the word "grace." By "grace" are we saved; and "grace" speaks not of the doing of man, but of the giving of God. Salvation is not a hard-won wage paid by the just Overseer of life; it is the bounty of love, the gift of grace.

¶ If there is one truth which God has of late helped me to see for myself it is this. Of course, I have always believed in what we call salvation by grace, as distinguished from salvation by works; but never until the last few months has the truth really *lived* for me. For years, like so much, alas! of one's theology, it has lain—to use the words of a great writer—in that "dim twilight land that surrounds every living faith; the land not of death, but of the shadow of death—the land of the unrealized and the inoperative." And now that it is beginning to emerge from the darkness I want others to stand by my side, that, if possible, we may see together the truth that made glad the heart of Paul. I do not speak as a theologian, but as a Christian man to Christian men, eager with them to know the blessedness of eternal life.[1]

4. Not at the outset of the regenerate life only, and not only when it issues into the heavenly ocean, but all along the course, the life eternal is still "the free gift of God." Let us now, to-day, to-morrow, and always, open the lips of surrendering and obedient

[1] George Jackson.

faith, and drink it in, abundantly, and yet more abundantly. And let us use it for the Giver.

¶ I heard a well-known preacher relate his experience. For long years he had prayed that he might realize abundant life in Christ. He had often agonized and sought this gift from God, but without avail. One day, as he travelled in a railway train, he was thinking about this wonderful gift. It happened that there was, as he journeyed, a great downfall of rain, the rain beating ceaselessly against the carriage windows. He said, "I looked out of the window, and as we passed a farmhouse I noticed a number of vessels placed outside to receive the welcome rain. Some were large, others were small; but both large and small received the rain. I said to myself, 'The gift of life has been outpoured by God. When Jesus ascended on high He granted gifts unto men. I may receive that gift, unworthy as I am, even as the noblest and most saintly may receive it.'"[1]

5. What are the advantages of receiving eternal life as a free gift?

(1) One advantage is the *Gladness* that accompanies it. Why is it that so many of us have so little gladness in our Christian life? Is it not just for this very reason that we have put self instead of God at the centre of it? We have talked and lived as if the whole responsibility of our salvation rested on our own weak shoulders. And since, naturally enough, we doubt our own strength, we are never sure, never at rest; even our joy has the worm of fear busy at the heart of it. "I am persuaded that I am able to keep——" We dare not say that; and as we never knew the Apostle's noble faith, "He is able to keep," we are without any "persuasion" at all; and instead of a ringing certainty, we have only a ghastly fear or, at best, a tremulous hope.

¶ You have seen the little engraving that adorns the title-page of Dora Greenwell's beautiful books: a hand grasping a cross, and about it this motto, *Et teneo et teneor*, "I both hold and am held." Alas! that so many of us have rent the motto in twain. We remember that we must hold, but we forget that we are also held, held of God. Let us speak no more as if ours were a religion without God; let us remember that when we have not strength even to cling, He still holds us; let us dare to believe that Jesus meant what He said when of His sheep He declared, "No one shall snatch them out of my hand."

[1] C. E. Walters.

Let me no more my comfort draw
From my frail hold of Thee,
In this alone rejoice with awe
Thy mighty grasp of me.[1]

May nevermore a selfish wish of mine
Grow to a deed, unless a greater care
For others' welfare in the incitement share.
O Nature, let my purposes combine,
Henceforth, in conscious unison with thine,—
To spread abroad God's gladness, and declare
In living form what is for ever fair—
Meekly to labour in thy great design,
Oh, let my little life be given whole!
If so, by action or by suffering,
Joy to my fellow-creatures I may bring,
Or, in the lowly likeness of my soul,
To beautiful creation's countless store
One form of beauty may be added more.[2]

(2) Another advantage is that it opens the way to *Progress*. Why is it, again, that we make so little progress in the Christian life? Why is our love, our trust, so dwarfed and stunted? Again, is not the answer the same? Self is at the centre where only God should be. But the soul never grows by the contemplation of itself. Love cannot be forced like some hot-house plant. It must be set in the light and sunshine of love; then it springs up of itself. Trust grows in the presence of the wholly trustworthy. Therefore, "Look unto me, and be ye saved," must be the law of all our life.

Lord of the howling wastes of life,
Where evils watch for prey,
And many a sacred gleam of good
In shadow dies away,
Borne on by Thee in paths unknown,
Well may we trust Thy hand alone,
And suffer angels of Thy own
To shield us as they may.

Revealer of a heaven encamped
Where'er Thy servants go,
By ministries of love to each,
That none beside may know,—

[1] G. Jackson. [2] George M'Knight.

By wings at many a pass outspread,
By winning joy and warning dread,
We learn the word which Thou hast said,
The truth which Thou wilt show.[1]

ii. God.

1. How un-Jewish it is to say that the gift *of God* is eternal life in Christ Jesus! The characteristic of the God of Judaism was the fact that He was incommunicable. He was self-existent, self-contained, absolutely self-sufficient. He dwelt in a region apart. His deepest nature had never been revealed to mortal eye; no man could see Him and live. The essential feature of His relation to humanity was the vastness of His distance from it. He could speak to man only through the medium of imperative command; and His communications required to be conveyed through the agency of intermediate intelligences. Such a view of God left no room for a conception which implied the communication of the Divine to the human. It would have repudiated the Pauline idea that God could present a gift of Himself, could make His own creatures the sharers in His essential life. Such a thought was the very antithesis of Judaism; yet it is the leading thought of the passage before us.

2. If eternal life is a gift of God it is not a work of man. According to St. Paul, eternal life is not a refinement; it is a renaissance. It is not the product of discipline, but the issue of birth. It is not an upper standard, but a regenerated order. Nowhere can you find a suggestion of a gradient leading by perceptible stages from the human to the Divine. There is no sloping stair, whose topmost step brings us to "the shining tableland, to which our God Himself is moon and sun." The man who has eternal life, and the man who has it not, occupy two different planes, and the passage from one to the other is by a process not of gradual consummation, but of immediate re-creation.

¶ That we can be schooled and cultured into eternal life is certainly the basis and trend of many men's reasoning. Life to them, in all its human range, would be imaged in a column of Aberdeen granite which stands in the museum of the University of Edinburgh. The column is of one unbroken piece, but it is

[1] A. L. Waring.

arranged in ascending sections to represent the different processes and stages through which the granite passes, from the quarry to the polished issue. The pedestal is rough, jagged, and primitive, just as it left the quarry, bearing all the marks of the blasting. And then follow layer upon layer, each succeeding one being subjected to a more rigid discipline than its predecessor, until every uncouthness is left behind, and all its wealthy and exquisite veins are discovered in the refined and shining issue. And that, I say, is how many people reason about eternal life. Eternal life is just common life perfected. Common life is the rough-hewn block; eternal life is the same block, chastened and refined. The two do not represent a change of substance, they represent differences effected by labour and culture.[1]

iii. Eternal Life.

There are many words with which we have been so long and so intimately familiar that we never pause to ask ourselves what we mean by them. They form the basis of our reasoning, but, like the foundations of a building, we do not notice their depth or structure; nay, for this very cause that they do underlie our common discourse, we cannot without a special effort gain any true idea of them. Now "life" is such a word as this. We all use it and argue about it, but can we explain it?

¶ Think for one moment of the infinite chasm between life and nothingness. On this side there is the glow of health, the consciousness of bodily vigour, the full exuberance of strength and spirits: on that a dreary void. On this side there is the keen sense of the countless joys with which the earth is filled, the glad delight in sunshine and beauty, the rich treasures of a creative mind: on that a dreary void. On this side there is a marvellous power of traversing the whole world in a moment, of holding communion with all the noblest and the best of men, of rising with the chorus of angels even to the throne of God: on that still the same dreary void. Whichever way we turn we see within us a crowd of powers and feelings which minister to our happiness and quicken our susceptibility; and the sum of these—this treasure beyond all treasures—we call "life."[2]

1. The life which we have in Christ is eternal life. That word "eternal" answers to some idea fixed in each of our souls, and we need not try to define it. It is enough that our own experience teaches us how vain it is to measure hope and joy,

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] B. F. Westcott.

fear and sorrow, by days and years, and not by the intensity of their working. And so Holy Scripture tells us of no change, no succession, no time, in the world to come. The sun and moon and stars—the measures of our earthly periods—shall have passed away, and all shall exist at once in the immediate presence of God.

¶ Wherever there is eternal life there is some apprehension of God: perhaps I should have expressed it better had I said there is some *appreciation* of God, some "awareness" of His all-encompassing Presence. When our Saviour says, "This is life eternal, to *know* Thee!"—I do not think the primary content of the word is mental illumination, although that will most assuredly be in the shining train; but it fundamentally refers to the intelligence of sympathy, the correspondence of kinship, if you will, the telepathic communion of spirits, attuned to the same key.[1]

2. Life eternal is so to be developed hereafter that Scripture speaks of it often as if it began hereafter; but it really begins here, and develops here, and is already "abundant" (John x. 10) here. It is not merely the manifold delights with which the New Jerusalem shall be filled—those streets of gold and songs of angels and deep visions of the universe. If we truly live, these will be ours: but we must gain life first. The sun would shed no gladness on a corpse. Music would wake no echo in the dead. And this is Life Eternal, that we may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent—God has quickened us together with Christ—Christ is the Life, and they who are in Him shall live for ever.

¶ There was one who said to me a little while ago, concerning a loved one who had been brought back to him after a long and troubled absence: "Even when I am at my desk, and immersed in my labour, there's a singing consciousness at the back of it all that she is in the home again!" That singing apprehension of a presence, in absorbing labours and in relaxing hours, is symbolic of the apprehension which is theirs who know the Lord. "This is life eternal, to know Thee," to appreciate Thee, to have a singing consciousness that everywhere, in spheres of labour and rest, the Lord is in the house! "Because he is at my right hand!" That is the apprehension of God. "When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no ill, for thou art with

[1] J. H. Jowett.

me." That is the apprehension of God; the singing basal consciousness that the Lover is in the house! It is "deep calling unto deep"; it is the sympathetic vibration of those who partake of the same nature, and that nature is Divine.[1]

It will not meet us where the shadows fall
  Beside the sea that bounds the Evening Land;
It will not greet us with its first clear call
  When Death has borne us to the farther strand.

It is not something yet to be revealed—
  The everlasting life—'tis here and now;
Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed
  With blindness for the pride upon our brow.

It calls us 'mid the traffic of the street,
  And calls in vain, because our ears are lent
To these poor babblements of praise that cheat
  The soul of heaven's truth, with earth's content.

It dwells not in innumerable years;
  It is the breath of God in timeless things—
The strong, divine persistence that inheres
  In love's red pulses and in faith's white wings.

It is the power whereby low lives aspire
  Unto the doing of a selfless deed,
Unto the slaying of a soft desire,
  In service of the high, unworldly creed.

It is the treasure that is ours to hold
  Secure, while all things else are turned to dust;
That priceless and imperishable gold
  Beyond the scathe of robber and of rust.

It is a clarion when the sun is high,
  The touch of greatness in the toil for bread,
The nameless comfort of the Western sky,
  The healing silence where we lay our dead.

And if we feel it not amid our strife,
  In all our toiling and in all our pain—
This rhythmic pulsing of immortal life—
  Then do we work and suffer here in vain.[2]

[1] J. H. Jowett.

[2] P. C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*, 9.

iv. In Christ Jesus our Lord.

"The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." That is where we are to seek and find the inheritance, "in Christ Jesus our Lord." And this is the reasoning of the sacred word, that eternal life is in the Son. The life that was in Jesus was of the eternal order, and of that sort of life the risen Lord is the reservoir and fountain. Get the music of these three great passages: "In him was life"; "I am the life"; "He that hath the Son hath life." So what we have got to do in order to get our legacy is to get the legator Himself. "He that hath the Son hath life." The "free gift" is "in Christ Jesus our Lord." We need trouble about nothing else except to become one with the Lord. "Having him we possess all things." If we become one with Him, His life becomes ours.

1. The gift from God of eternal life is not merely *through* Christ Jesus (as in the Authorized Version), it is *in* Christ Jesus. What a mystery is this, that we, poor and weak and sinful as we are, can ever be incorporated into Christ—that in Him we can, again, be made living souls inspired by God's Spirit; and more wonderful still that while we are yet on earth this mighty change can be realized. But it is so written for our learning, and let us rejoice with all reverence while we believe that we may live *in* Christ as very members of His body; that we may claim as ours the righteousness which He has wrought, the sorrow which He has suffered. At the same time, we must remember that there is a fearful contrast to all this. The Christian has eternal life *now* only so far as he is one with Christ, and to be cut off from Him, to be without Him, to know Him not, that is real death—death more terrible than our darkened minds can understand at present.

¶ Is it a matter of indifference whether we say "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus" or "through Christ Jesus"? To me, I confess, it makes a fundamental difference in the whole conception of Christianity whether we regard life as something which Christ has won for us apart from Himself, or something which is absolutely bound up with Himself, and realized only in vital fellowship with Him. And I shall hold ten years of life well spent [as one of the Revisers] if I have been enabled to help in any degree in bringing this thought home to English-speaking people in years to come. The phrase represents, if you please, a

Hebrew idiom—a Hebrew mode of conception. What then? It was the mode of conception which God was pleased to choose for conveying His truth to the world. Let it, then, be carefully guarded. Let it be faithfully rendered. Let it be offered to our common people, that they may, by patient reflexion, grasp the fulness of the lesson.[1]

Christ, the Wisdom and the Power!
From our labour's fleeting hour
To that timeless age of bliss
Which shall crown the toil of this,
Grant that all our life may be
Hidden and revealed "in Thee."

That our work may be divine
Seek we not our own but Thine;
Lost to self and found "in Thee,"
Find we sweet Humility,
Zeal by reverent Love refined,
True Devotion's single mind.

So "in Thee" we shall be strong,
Seem the labour light or long;
And, though clouds of self and sin
Darken round us and within,
So not dimly shall we see
Light to lighten all "in Thee."[2]

2. What is required of us that we may receive the gift in Christ?

(1) *Belief.* And what is belief? It is not the suppression of reason. Belief is the exaltation of the noblest hypotheses to the throne of the life. To believe in Christ is to take the sublimest assumptions and make them the principles of our soul. To believe in Christ is to take the highest we know and to allow it to govern all that we do. To believe in Christ is to venture our life on the assumptions of Christ. Do you know anything higher, nobler, more glorious, than the assumptions of Christ? To believe is to accept them, to venture on them, and to venture in the assurance that the highest is always the truest and best. He claims to be able to convert destructive remorse into a constructive penitence. He claims to be able to take the virus out

[1] B. F. Westcott.

[2] S. J. Stone, *Poems and Hymns*, 262.

of a poisoning guilt. He claims to be able to put dynamic into feeble and struggling virtue. He claims to be able to weld the complexities of life into unity, and to convert its discords into harmony. He claims to be able to take the alienated and embattled individuals of the race, and out of the scattered and hostile fragments to create a brotherhood. This is what our Saviour claims to do. To believe is to let Him do it, and to offer one's life for the sacred experiment!

(2) *Obedience.* Belief involves obedience. In these high regions no one can become free without first becoming a slave. But the servitude is not irksome; it is sweetened and glorified by its issue. We must die to self if we would live to God! That is where so many of us fail. We are seeking kinship with the Divine, and we will not surrender ourselves to its blessed ministry.

I lived for myself, I thought for myself,
For myself, and none beside;
Just as if Jesus had never lived,
As if He had never died.

3. And what do belief and obedience bring us?

(1) They bring us *power.* We share the Divine power—power over sin, and strength to lead a holy life. He—Jesus—was absolutely pure in a world of darkness. In Christ we may conquer sin.

¶ If we study the lives and writings of the highest types of Christian men we shall find that they are characterized by two things. One is the depth of their sense of sin. St. Paul, St. Augustine, the author of "The Imitation," John Bunyan, Samuel Rutherford. This note characterizes them all. But there is another. It is their sense of the all-sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour from sin. When, again, we study the life of Christ we find that it is characterized by two things—His consciousness of His own sinlessness; and His sense of His power to take away the sin of others.[1]

(2) They bring us the calm *assurance of life everlasting.* "I am the Resurrection and the Life," said Jesus; "he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John xi. 25). In Jesus, death is robbed of its horror, and the grave of its victory. We fall asleep just as a weary man, who, harassed by

[1] W. Martin.

business and daily cares, flings himself on the bed at night and sleeps; and as he awakens with new energy to the new life of the morrow, so we, worn-out and tired, or called to a higher service, fall asleep in death, to awaken to the morning of a never-ending day. Ah! how glorious is this truth when, with sad hearts, we stand by the open grave in which we have laid a loved one to rest. Then we are able to say:—

> And with the morn those angel faces smile
> Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

If I were told that I must die to-morrow,
That the next sun
Which sinks should bear me past all fear and sorrow
For any one,
All the fight fought, and all the short journey through,
What should I do?

I do not think that I would shrink or falter,
But just go on
Doing my work, nor change, nor seek to alter
Aught that is gone;
But rise and move, and smile, and pray
For one more day.

And lying down at night for a last sleeping,
Say in that ear
Which hearkens ever, "Lord, within Thy keeping
How should I fear?
And when to-morrow brings Thee nearer still,
Do Thou Thy will."

I might not sleep for awe, but peaceful, tender,
My soul would lie
All night long; and when the morning splendour
Flashed o'er the sky,
I think that I could smile, could calmly say,
"Welcome His day."

But if a wondrous hand from the blue yonder
Held out a scroll,
Upon which my life was writ, and I with wonder
Beheld unroll
To a long century's end its mystic clue,
What should I do?

What could I do, O blessed Guide and Master,
Other than this—
Still to go on as now, not slower, faster,
Nor fear to miss
The road, although so very long it be,
While led by Thee?

Step by step, feeling Thee close behind me,
Although unseen;
Through thorns, through flowers, whether the tempest hide Thee
Or heaven's serene,
Assured Thy faithfulness cannot betray—
Thy love decay.

I may not know, my God; no hand revealeth
Thy counsels wise,
Along the path no deepening shadow stealeth,
No voice replies
To all my questioning thought, the time to tell,
And it is well.

Let me keep on, abiding and unfearing
That will always,
Through a long century's ripening fruition,
Or a short day's.
Thou canst not come too soon, and I can wait
If Thou come late.

Law or Love.

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Law or Love.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.—Rom. viii. 3, 4.

1. The passage with which the previous chapter closes is one of the most interesting perhaps that St. Paul ever wrote, because, in describing there his own feelings and experiences, he has depicted so faithfully, so graphically, the feelings and experiences of all earnest souls. The passage reveals pathetic secrets of theirs, arrests them with a vivid portrayal of themselves. "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not, for the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, I do. I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members." What heart is there in which these words are not more or less echoed? Have we not known what it is, while perceiving and admiring the right, to be baffled by contrary impulses in our wish and purpose to practize it? We have seen its Divine claim and majesty, and have meant, have craved and struggled to respond to it, yet could not, held down and overborne by the weight of something lower belonging to us.

> As one whose footsteps halt,
> Toiling in immeasurable sand.
> And o'er a weary, sultry land,
> Far beneath a blazing vault,
> Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,
> The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

2. The question is how to be delivered from the thraldom of

moral evil. Man is in contact with law, the transgression of which recoils upon him at every step. He does not need to be for ever told of it. The question is how to take his feet from the toils; how to get the desire and the power to love and obey; how to silence that conflict between the conscience and the lower desires which makes the soul a house divided against itself. Here is man loaded down with his passions, coming into the world with heavy tendencies on the animal side, depraved, inheriting the sinful blood of generation upon generation, exposed to all evil and overborne by temptation, ignorant, weak, fallible, limited in his powers, finding causes for his sinfulness which inhere in the very structure of his body and his mind, how shall he keep the moral law? How shall he get the desire to keep it? To do that which is right, says Paul, is with me, but "how to perform" that which I would, that is the difficulty. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death—who shall deliver me from this spiritual deadness of the soul, this corruption of the affections, this impotence of the will, this unwillingness to love and obey? That is the need of men in temptation. That is the cry of every heart who ever made a struggle to lead a clean and noble life. The law man knows; and all religious teachers take care that he shall continue to understand it, and that he shall not forget it. But this is not the main trouble, the trouble is how to get the willingness, the desire to obey the law. Well, Paul answers that question. The Gospel is the answer to it. While men are still without moral strength, Christ dies for the ungodly. The power of the new life in Christ Jesus delivers us from the old power of sin and death. If Christ be in us, the flesh is dead in respect of sin, the spirit is alive in respect of rectitude and obedience. Christ creates the motive of love.

3. The text would be unintelligible unless we observed its antithetical setting. It is a contrast between law and love as redemptive forces in human life. Paul does not discuss it with the philosopher's pleasure in abstract reasoning. He is dealing with facts. Law was a fact. Love was a fact. In times past God had sought to govern the world by law. Now, through Jesus Christ, God was seeking to rule life by love. Which was the successful redemptive principle? On this point Paul's mind

was absolutely convinced. Law is powerless, helpless, impotent. Love is infinitely capable and eternally omnipotent. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God has achieved by "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," and He, being "an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh," and, because of that, the end of the law is attained, "the ordinance of the law" is now "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

The text contains the following statements :—

1. The Law could not free us from sin and death,—its failure being due to the weakness of the flesh.
2. God sent His own Son
   (1) in the likeness of sinful flesh;
   (2) and (as an offering) for sin.
3. He thus condemned sin in the flesh.
   (1) In order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.
   (2) Who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

I.

The Failure of the Law.

i. The Fact of the Failure.

1. What is it that the Law could not do? It could not condemn sin in the flesh in such a way as to ensure that the righteousness of the law shall be fulfilled in us. The law demands righteousness: the law condemns sin. But the law cannot secure the fulfilment of the demand which it makes upon us; it cannot accomplish the destruction of the sin which it condemns; in other words, it cannot condemn sin effectually. It has indeed a terrible power to condemn; it can, it does, condemn the *sinner* most effectually, so as to secure *his* destruction; but it cannot effectually condemn the *sin* rooted in the flesh, so as to effect *its* destruction.

2. What is needed is that the sinner should be brought heartily to renounce the service of sin, and heartily to embrace the service of God, that, in the words of the Apostle himself, he should

become "dead to sin" and "alive unto God." The sinner must be brought into thorough, hearty agreement with God's opposition to sin; and the law cannot produce such a change of heart as this: it may prevent the man from committing overt acts of sin, but that is a very different thing from destroying the love of sin itself, and inspiring a heart-hatred of the abominable thing which God hates. That the law could not do this for him, Paul had learned from his own experience. So long as he remained a stranger to God's saving grace, the law, far from delivering him from the dominion of sin, only roused to greater activity the evil principles that were within him. He had to learn, by passing through struggles of the most painful kind, that it is not to the law that we must look for deliverance from the ruling power of sin.

¶ The makers of our human laws know that they are weak. They know that while they promulgate their regulations they cannot reckon on obedience. We have laws against gambling, but gambling still goes on. We have a great body of laws to regulate the drink traffic, but you cannot pick up the newspapers without reading of the prosecution of some offender, or of some crime for which some one should be punished. It is because we know the law is weak that we engage inspectors and policemen. We build prisons, and penitentiaries, and reformatories, and keep them up at great expense, because we know that, while the laws are known, the simple knowledge is no guarantee of obedience.[1]

3. But, even though the law is weak, it cannot be said to be useless. It serves other and necessary purposes. The Apostle recognizes that. "Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." "Where there is no law neither is there transgression." "Sin is not imputed where there is no law." "Howbeit, I had not known sin except through the law." It is by the law that we have the knowledge of sin. If we crossed the field and never saw the signboard, while we should be actual transgressors, there would be no guilt in the trespass. If, however, we saw the signboard, and sinned against knowledge, we should be verily guilty. And so, God, by the promulgation of His law, has created a conscience of sin, even as the State, by the announcement of its laws, has created a national sense of sin. The law, then, is necessary as an educational factor. It is the "schoolmaster."

[1] J. G. Bowran.

But, as the pedagogue cannot manufacture geniuses, so the law cannot make saints.

If not with hope of life,
  Begin with fear of death:
Strive the tremendous lifelong strife
    Breath after breath.

Bleed on beneath the rod;
  Weep on until thou see;
Turn fear and hope to love of God
    Who loveth thee.

Turn all to love, poor soul;
  Be love thy watch and ward;
Be love thy starting-point, thy goal,
    And thy reward.[1]

ii. The Cause of the Failure.

1. It is natural enough that we should think in the first instance of the *law* as the agency fitted to bring about the desired result. What can be needed to secure men's fulfilling the righteousness of the law but just that they should have its most reasonable requirements set plainly before them, clothed with the august authority of God Himself? It might seem as if the law coming to men thus, having its claims enforced, moreover, by the promise of reward in the case of obedience, and by the threat of punishment in the case of disobedience, were the very agency fitted to secure the object desired, did not experience prove that it is utterly powerless to accomplish it. That the powers of the law might be fully tested, it was solemnly promulgated at Mount Sinai, in the hearing of all Israel, amidst the most overwhelming manifestations of the Divine majesty and glory. But even when thus proclaimed in the most impressive manner by God Himself, it failed to secure the fulfilment of its just requirements. And what was it that rendered the law powerless? It was weak, the Apostle says, "through the flesh."

2. The law is good in itself, but it has to work through the sinful nature. The only powers to which it can appeal are those

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

which are already in rebellion. A discrowned king whose only forces to conquer his rebellious subjects are the rebels themselves is not likely to regain his crown. Because law brings no new element into our humanity, its appeal to our humanity has little more effect than that of the wind whistling through an archway. It appeals to conscience and reason by a plain declaration of what is right; to will and understanding by an exhibition of authority; to fears and prudence by plainly setting forth consequences. But what is to be done with men who know what is right but have no wish to do it, who believe that they ought but will not, who know the consequences but "choose rather the pleasures of sin for a season," and shuffle the future out of their minds altogether?

¶ This is the essential weakness of all law. The tyrant is not afraid so long as there is no one threatening his reign but the unarmed herald of a discrowned king. His citadel will not surrender to the blast of the trumpet blown from Sinai.[1]

3. The weakness of the law is accentuated when we think of its penal aspects. Even when the law rebounds upon the offender it seldom reclaims and improves. It is punitive and not remedial. You may send a man to the tread-mill, but as he performs the revolutions he may be evolving fresh schemes of crime. You may keep the thief in solitary confinement, hoping to silence him into honesty, but the probability is that he is worse on the day of his liberation than on the day of his apprehension. Of law, both Divine and human, the Apostle's analysis is correct. It is weak, and weak through the flesh. Its chief design it cannot accomplish. It cannot secure compliance.

¶ It is the universal experience that human nature rebels against the severities of repression. Is not that what Paul means when he says: "For I had not known coveting except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet; but sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting." There is a strange perversity in the flesh. There is nothing so tempting to us as the thing prohibited. We see the signboard: "No road this way. Trespassers will be prosecuted," and through love of rebellion we select the prohibited path. The railway companies demand that every passenger shall have either a pass or a ticket, but, through sheer love of duping the law, men attempt the

[1] A. Maclaren.

journey free of cost. The father who plays the despot in his family will create a household of rebels. The State where anarchy is rife is the State where tyrants rule.[1]

4. This is the Gospel, or, one may say, this is the essence of the Gospel, that Christianity is not simply a new and more impressive declaration that men are sinners, but a new power, greater than the world has ever known before, to help men out of the snares of sin, that they may be sinners no longer. For a long time now men have been told they are sinners. For six thousand years man has heard thundered in his ears the lesson of the law. It has been driven in upon his thoughts by all the penal inflictions of the Divine judgment; by the fires that rained ruin on the cities of the plain; by the waters that overswept the world in the days of Noah; by the handwriting on the wall that doomed the proud city of Babylon; by the sword and fire that fell on sacred Jerusalem; by the decay of Rome, sapped and undermined by its own vices; by all the records of the woe that has fallen on wicked men since time began. Men know that fire burns and that water drowns; so they know also that selfishness withers, that intemperance ruins, that ambition overleaps itself and falls on the other side, that avarice belittles the mind, and licentiousness blasts the body and the soul; men know, on the other hand, that virtue brings happiness and that uprightness brings peace. Men know this. But that is not the point. The point is to get a working motive that will lead them to act upon this knowledge.

¶ "One may deal with things without love, one may cut down trees, make bricks, and hammer iron without love, but one cannot deal with men without love."[2]

¶ Paracelsus believed that knowledge is power, and it was that that kindled and kept alive for a time his transcendent ambition. And when he was defeated, when his mistake had become clear to him, it was natural that he should say:

> What wonder if I saw no way to shun
> Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.

But he had learned a deeper lesson than that. He had come to see that there is a force surpassing in its majesty and might any

[1] J. G. Bowran. [2] Leo Tolstoi.

that could possibly accrue from the acquisition of boundless stores of learning:

> I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!
> And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
> His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
> I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
> Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
> And what proportion love should hold with power
> In his right constitution; love preceding
> Power, and with much power, always much more love;
> Love still too straitened in his present means,
> And earnest for new power to set love free.[1]

II.

The Method of Love.

i. God sent His own Son.

1. The words imply that the Divine Sonship of Jesus was not a relationship built up in the course of His life upon earth by acts of obedience and spiritual fellowship. A king can only send as his messenger and representative one who has already grown into such ripe wisdom and proved loyalty that he can fulfil the trust imposed upon him. To be sent implies an antecedent character and personality which qualify for the special mission.

¶ We cannot feel the power of God's condemnation of sin by the Cross till we have a just conception and realization of the truth of the person of Him who endured the Cross and despized the shame. Then the thought becomes overwhelming. Whether God has any other way by which He can more forcibly and solemnly express His sense of the evil and demerit of sin to others of His creatures, we do not know; but we can conceive of no way in which He could have more forcibly and solemnly expressed it to us than the way He has chosen—through the voluntary death of His own Divine Son on the malefactor's cross.

2. God sent Him. For the condemnation of sin by Christ God owed to Himself as the righteous God who hates sin; and He owed it also to us, whom He is anxious to save from sin; and instead of dispensing with it in the fulness of His Fatherhood, as some would tell us, His Fatherhood made it the more obligatory.

[1] J. Flew, *Studies in Browning*, 146.

The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God can in no way conflict with the true doctrine of the Atonement, but confirms it; for the true father must ever have a regard to what may affect the welfare of his children; and what could have more to do with our welfare than the conveyance to us of the heavenly Father's own sense and estimate of sin?

¶ There was more fatherhood in the Cross (where holiness met guilt) than in the prodigal's father (where love met shame). There was more fatherhood for our souls in the desertion of the Cross than in that which melts our hearts in the prodigal's embrace. It is not a father's sensitive love only that we have wounded, but His holy law. Man is not a mere runaway, but a rebel; not a pitiful coward, but a bold and bitter mutineer. Does not Kant confess as a moralist the radical evil in man, and Carlyle speak of his "infinite damnability"?[1]

ii. In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh.

Christ was sent "in likeness *of sinful flesh*," not as if He had taken on Him the "likeness of flesh" in the sense of a semblance of body instead of its reality: but St. Paul means us to understand likeness to the flesh which sinned, because the flesh of Christ, which committed no sin itself, was like that which had sinned—like it in its nature, but not in the corruption it received from Adam: whence we also affirm that there was in Christ the same flesh as that whose nature in man is sinful.[2]

1. The phrase, "the likeness of the flesh of sin," implies the real humanity of Jesus, and His perfect sinlessness; and suggests the first way in which He condemns sin in the flesh. In His life He repeats the law in a higher fashion. What the one spoke in words the other realized in "loveliness of perfect deeds"; and all men own that example is the mightiest preacher of righteousness, and that active goodness draws to itself reverence and sways men to imitate. But His life lived in human nature gives a new hope of the possibilities of that nature even in us. The dream of perfect beauty "in the flesh" has been realized. What the Man Christ Jesus was, He was that we may become. In the very flesh in which the tyrant rules, Jesus shows the possibility and the loveliness of a holy life.

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *The Holy Father and the Living Christ*, 27. [2] Tertullian.

¶ St. Paul speaks of Christ as having been "God's own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"—that is, here was a man with a nature like ours, including flesh like ours, the very flesh which in us is always bringing forth sin, always causing us to fail and fall short, in spite of our truer vision and aspiration, and the hindering, defiling influence of which we often deplore as irresistible and not to be prevailed against; and this man was "God's own Son" in the flesh, without spot and blameless, exhibiting in it a sustained perfection of filial obedience.[1]

2. That the Son of God had to take upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh was perhaps the bitterest and most agonizing humiliation of His earthly lot. The fact that He received at birth a body susceptible to pain, frailty, privation, with a sentence of death written upon its constituents, was not the saddest part of His destiny. If one of our children were to show constitutional symptoms, marking him out for a career of weakness and long-dragging pain, it would trouble us less than if, through some inexplicable cause, he were to resemble in features a notorious criminal, or carry to the grave a birthmark linking him with some scene of infamy and shame. Upon the form assumed by Him, who was the express image of His Father's glory, the likeness of a criminal race was stamped. The spirit and character of Jesus could not fail to refine and beautify the flesh with which He was invested, and painters are true to the genius of the Gospel when they idealize His features into celestial charm. But the Eternal Father could not forget that it was into the likeness of sinful flesh the Son entered through His birth on earth, a likeness in which traits sacred and Divine were curiously mixed with the lineaments we associate with moral deformity and transgression; nor could the Son Himself forget this burning humiliation through which He must pass in His work of saving men.

¶ A missionary traveller in inland China once had to reach a ferry by taking off shoes and socks and traversing a muddy pathway from which the flood had only just retired. After walking a few paces he noticed a poor unsightly leper, a few yards ahead, slowly moving to the same point. The marks of his disfigured feet were imprinted in the mud, and it caused a shudder as the missionary found himself treading, with bare feet, in the steps of a loathsome beggar. The contact was indirect, and perhaps there was no risk, but the sickening association haunted his imagination

[1] S. A. Tipple.

for days. If the identification had been more intimate, and the white man had been compelled to shelter in the sufferer's grass-hut, to share the same couch, to wear his contaminated raiment, it might have maddened an over-sensitive brain.[1]

¶ A well-known American story by Wendell Holmes, in which romance and scientific speculation are curiously blended, deals with the problem of prenatal inoculation by snake-bite. The mother of Elsie Venner, into whose blood the poison of the rattlesnake has entered, dies in giving birth to her baby girl. The child grows up with eccentricities bordering on insanity, and becomes an object of dread to neighbours and school-companions. She is gifted with a curious power of fascination, and is able to dominate those upon whom she fixes her weird and glittering eyes. Her movements are serpentine, and she shows a special fondness for snake-like trinkets of gold. Sometimes she secludes herself in a mountain cave haunted by the creatures of whom before her birth she was an unconscious victim. All her gestures are suggestive of this tragic misfortune known only to her father and her negro nurse. Before she dies, her nature is softened and beautifully humanized. If such an incident were possible, of course the law of moral responsibility could cover only one half of her life. But that question apart, what a distress to the father to find his child shunned and abhorred, although he himself might know the secret of her birth and have faith in the complete innocence of her deepest nature. The assimilation of the child for a time to a lower and a dreaded type of life—a type that has been an age-long symbol of malignant and deadly temper—must surely have been a tragedy of the deepest and most mysterious distress.

iii. And for Sin.

The phrase may be rendered (as in the Revised Version) "as an offering for sin," since it is the usual equivalent in the Greek New Testament for a sin-offering. But the context demands a wider reference, since it includes, along with the expiation, the practical condemnation and destruction of sin. Christ has come "for sin." That is to say, His incarnation and death had relation to, and had it for their object to remove, human sin. He comes to blot out the evil, to bring God's pardon. The recognition of His sacrifice supplies the adequate motive to copy His example, and they who see in His death God's sacrifice for man's sin cannot but yield themselves to Him, and find in obedience a delight.

[1] T. G. Selby.

Love kindled at His love makes likeness and transmutes the outward law into an inward "spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

¶ It is of great importance that you see the sacrificial character of Christ's condemnation of sin in the flesh—that besides seeing that Christ clearly declared the flesh to be evil, and, in so declaring, did manifest God's righteous condemnation of sin, and completed this testimony in giving Himself to die, you must also see that He did this *as a sacrifice for sin*. If not done as a sacrifice, the fact itself would merely leave us where we were. It would shed light on the evil of our state, but would not grant us deliverance from evil. But when we see Christ doing this as a sacrifice for sin—when we see Him coming into our nature, and taking it up, and presenting it holy to God, and doing this as a sacrifice for sin—then our thoughts are turned to the history of sin, and to the fact that He is not the only being who has this flesh. Our thoughts are turned to the whole human race; and we are taught concerning them that this deed has reference to them, and that it was not for a mere display of the power of the Son of God, taking an unclean thing and making it clean, that Christ came and took our flesh, but that He came with reference to those who were dwelling in this flesh, and for them shed His blood.[1]

III.

The Success of Love.

i. He condemned Sin in the Flesh.

He condemned sin in the flesh, in which sin exercises its usurped dominion. And how did God condemn sin in the flesh, *i.e.* in human nature generally? (1) By exhibiting in the person of His Incarnate Son the same flesh in substance, but free from sin, He proved that sin was in the flesh only as an unnatural and usurping tyrant. Thus the manifestation of Christ in sinless humanity at once condemned sin in principle. But (2) God condemned sin practically and effectually by destroying its power and casting it out; and this is the sense especially required by the context. The law could condemn sin only in word, and could not make its condemnation effectual. Christ, coming "for sin," not only made atonement for it by His Death, but, uniting man to Himself "in newness of life," gave actual effect to the condemnation of sin by destroying its dominion "in the flesh" through the life-giving sanctifying power of His Spirit.

[1] J. M'Leod Campbell.

1. God's condemnation of sin, understood in this light, comes to us, indeed, in other ways than through the death of Christ. It comes in the constitution of nature, in which, binding sin and misery together in a nexus more firm than iron, and which no power of man can dissolve, He has revealed from heaven, for all the ages of time, His wrath "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It comes through the conscience, that sensitive magnet in man's soul which ever points (very feebly indeed in many) to the pole of God's own righteousness, and which, until utterly darkened and perverted by sin, ever condemns sin. It comes through His revealed law, whose very office it is to condemn sin, and in every denunciation of sin in His written Word. But at last it came in another and entirely different way—through the suffering and death of the righteous Christ, God's own Divine Son. And it was evidently in this new way of declaring the mind or judgment of God against sin that Christ could do what the law was impotent to accomplish.

2. God condemned sin by allowing it to condemn itself. Just as some atrocious act of wrong, of violence, or of shame condemns crime, in the eyes of men, by showing them what crime can do, so He allowed sin to condemn itself by showing for ever what sin can do. It could reject and cast out the Divine Christ, the Holy One of God, and nail Him to a malefactor's cross. And this itself proclaimed, and proclaimed for ever, sin's need of atonement. But this was not the only way in which our Lord condemned sin by His death. He became "obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross," which marks the extent of His obedience. His act of obedience even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross, must have been, therefore, *an act of obedience to God.* And why did God require this act of obedience? The only answer is that of the Apostle: to "show his righteousness"; to "condemn sin in the flesh" (by Christ's dying a sacrifice for sin in the flesh); to condemn it, not by a blind act of suffering and death, but through the mind and will of His own Son expressing themselves through voluntary suffering and death.

3. By the Death of Christ upon the Cross, a death endured in His human nature, He once and for ever broke off all contact with Sin, which could touch Him only through that nature.

Henceforth Sin can lay no claim against Him. Neither can it lay any claim against the believer; for the believer also has died with Christ. Henceforth when Sin comes to prosecute its claim, it is cast in its suit and its former victim is acquitted. The one culminating and decisive act by which this state of things was brought about is the Death of Christ, to which all the subsequent immunity of Christians is to be referred.

¶ Sin in the flesh was tolerated and condoned before Jesus came down to live His sinless life amongst men. It was accepted everywhere as a necessity inherent in the visible organic framework of things. It is interesting to think that the old tradition which makes a Persian king one of the Magi lends itself to an instructive interpretation, because the religion of the ancient Persians held that matter was inherently evil and could never by any possibility become good. The Babe before whom he bowed was to prove in His personal history and example that it was not so.

¶ Men often go on sinning, avowing that sin is no sin, for want of hope. They accept it as part of the inevitable order when no remedy appears. It is despondency which marks out much of our social wreckage as irretrievably derelict. Many unhappy beings around us have given up the fight and see no encouragement to attempt better things. They justify themselves in wrong-doing and invert all ethical classifications, because it seems no longer possible, at least for such as they are, to reap the rewards of virtue. The new voice of hope which speaks in the heart, the voice of the Incarnate and sin-atoning Saviour, is a sentence of death upon the evil which has so long been rampant in the flesh. God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh wrote a sentence of final condemnation upon sin in the flesh. Through our union with the Redeeming Head, sin in us is sentenced to its final overthrow.

ii. That the Requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.

That unreserved consent of Christ to the full demands of the law which gave His death its atoning value and efficacy was not an act of merely negative value—valuable, that is to say, in the way of annulling and abolishing the evil which sin had wrought. It was at the same time an act of the highest positive worth, the one transcendent act in which the entire moral force of the new spiritual humanity concentrates and embodies itself, the absolute perfection of righteousness. And this righteousness

of God is revealed to faith; by faith we appropriate it and make it in very truth our own.

1. The one righteous demand of the law, which includes all its other demands, is holy obedience inspired by the love of God (Luke x. 27). That this "righteous demand of the law might be fulfilled in us," was the great final cause of God's sending His Son into the world.

2. Christ came not to insist upon a lower code of morals. It is His will not that we should be less holy, but that we should be holy as God is holy, and perfect as He is perfect. At the outset of His public ministry, He announced that not one jot or tittle of the law should pass away, but that its commandments should be obeyed far more perfectly than ever before, by conformity to its spirit rather than by dull and superficial obedience to its external demands. Only in this way would the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

¶ Love makes obedience natural and inevitable. So Jesus taught. "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me, he will keep my word." Paul expresses it thus: "Love, therefore, is the fulfilment of the law." It is only to the loveless heart that the law is irksome. Obedience is a pleasure when we love. The man who loves God does not need to have the decalogue read every day. Because love is in his heart, he simply cannot break the commandments. He will obey them all, not by mere compliance with the negative restrictions, but by loving fidelity to their spiritual intent. The home where love is has no need for domestic legislation. The father's word is law. The mother's wish is a command.

iii. Who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.

This clause defines the *character* of those in whom the righteous requirement of the law is to be fulfilled; namely, such as "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." They "walk not after the flesh"—the flesh with its affections and lusts rebels against the law—"but after the spirit."

1. By the entrance of the Spirit of holiness into a human spirit, the usurper is driven from the central fortress: and though

he may linger in the outworks and keep up a guerilla warfare, that is all he can do. We never truly apprehend Christ's gift to man until we recognize that He not merely "died for our sins," but lives to impart the principle of holiness in the gift of His Spirit. The dominion of that imparted Spirit is gradual and progressive. The Canaanite may still be in the land, but a growing power, working in and through us, is warring against all in us that still owns allegiance to that alien power, and there can be no end to the victorious struggle until the whole body, soul, and spirit be entirely under the influence of the Spirit that dwells in us, and nothing shall hurt or destroy in what shall then be all God's holy mountain.

2. We are brought into sympathy with the Law, because we are brought into grateful and loving sympathy with the great Lawgiver. When He could not by His commandments overcome the evil that was in us, He has by the power of His love, revealed in His long-suffering patience and boundless sacrifice, brought us into willing subjection to Himself, the subjection of a grateful love that will withhold nothing from Him, but will gladly give up everything for His sake. It is not the power of authority, but that of a transforming love, that brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. The devil rises up within us when it is mere force that speaks to us, but when love speaks in infinite sacrifice we are shamed out of all our indifference, and conquered in all our rebellion. The mind which was also in Christ Jesus takes possession of us, imparting new desires and new motives, so that all resistance is gone, and obedience becomes a joy and duty a privilege. This is true to the extent that we are the recipients of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though rich, yet for our sakes became poor.

As the waxing moon can take
The tidal waters in her wake
And lead them round and round to break
  Obedient to her drawings dim;
So may the movements of His mind,
The first Great Father of mankind,
Affect with answering movements blind,
  And draw the souls that breathe by Him.[1]

[1] Jean Ingelow.

The Carnal and the Spiritual.

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The Carnal and the Spiritual.

To be carnally minded (R.V. "the mind of the flesh") is death; but to be spiritually minded (R.V. "the mind of the spirit") is life and peace.—Rom. viii. 6.

This is one of St. Paul's keen contrasts. It is expressed in language that is difficult to translate. The most literal translation possible is actually given in the Revised Version—"The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the spirit is life and peace." (This is the translation also of the American Revised Version, except that "Spirit" is spelt with a capital.) But such a phrase as "the mind of the flesh," or "the mind of the spirit" is scarcely English. The translation of the Authorized Version (though it is rather a paraphrase than a translation) is perhaps as intelligible as any that can be made—"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

I.

Carnal Mindedness.

"To be carnally minded is death." The literal words are "the mind of the flesh is death." Let us consider (1) what is meant by "the flesh"; (2) by "the mind of the flesh"; and (3) by "death."

i. The Flesh.

Here, as elsewhere in these chapters of Romans, the flesh is that side of human nature on which it is morally weak, the side on which man's physical organism leads him into sin.

The word "flesh" occurs twenty-eight times in Romans, and frequently in St. Paul's other Epistles, especially Galatians: it has various meanings which must be carefully distinguished, if we

wish to have a clear understanding of the Apostle's teaching in many important passages.

1. In its original and proper meaning "flesh" denotes the material of the living body, whether of man or of other animals, as in Lev. xvii. 11. In this sense it occurs in Rom. ii. 28, "circumcision which is outward in the flesh."

2. In the common Hebrew phrase "all flesh" (Gen. vi. 12, 13, 19, vii. 21), all earthly living things are included with man, except where the context limits the meaning to mankind (Job xii. 10; Ps. lxv. 2; Joel ii. 28).

3. "Flesh" is applied by St. Paul to human kindred, as in Rom. ix. 3, "My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh"; xi. 14, "My flesh." This usage, like the preceding, is derived from the Old Testament: see Gen. xxxvii. 27, "He is our brother and our flesh." In Rom. ix. 8, on the other hand, there is an express contrast made between the "children of the flesh," and the "children of the promise," equivalent to the contrast in Gal. iv. 29 between him "that was born after the flesh" and him "that was born after the Spirit." In this usage "flesh" represents man's purely natural, earthly condition, a condition in which he is subject to infirmity, suffering, and death, subject also to the temptations which work through the senses and their appetites, but not originally or essentially sinful. It is in this sense that Christ is said in Rom. i. 3 to have been "made of the seed of David as to the flesh," and in ix. 5 to have sprung "as concerning the flesh" from Israel. In both passages "flesh" denotes what was simply and solely natural in His earthly life.

4. Though "the flesh" is not essentially sinful, it is essentially weak, and hence the word is used to describe man in his weakness, physical, intellectual, or moral.

(1) As connoting mere physical weakness "the flesh" is found in several passages of St. Paul's Epistles (2 Cor. iv. 11, vii. 5, xii. 7; Gal. ii. 20, iv. 13) but not in Romans. We may remark that such a passage as Gal. ii. 20, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," is decisive against the notion that "flesh" is something essentially sinful. Yet mere physical weakness of the flesh may be a hindrance to man's spirit,

as in Matt. xxvi. 41, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"; and the human spirit thus hampered by the weakness of the flesh is so far unfitted to be the organ of the Spirit of God.

(2) This opposition of "the flesh" to all that is spiritual is more clearly marked when "the flesh" is regarded as the cause of intellectual weakness. This is the case in Rom. vi. 19, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh," a passage which should be compared with 1 Cor. ii. 14, iii. 1.

(3) But "the flesh" is regarded by St. Paul as a dwelling-place and seat (not necessarily the only seat) of sin. This judgment is the result of practical experience, not of any speculative analysis of the ideas of "flesh" and "sin." He found as a fact sin dwelling in his flesh; and he regarded this as a fact of universal experience (Rom. iii. 9–20); but we have no reason to suppose that he regarded sin as inseparable from the very essence of "the flesh." The flesh thus ruled by sin becomes a chief source of opposition, not only to the better impulses of "the mind," but also to the law of God and to the influence of His Spirit.

ii. The Mind of the Flesh.

The word used by St. Paul is not the ordinary word for mind. It is a word that expresses rather the *contents* of the mind—its thought, purpose, inclination or attitude, as in Rom. viii. 27, "God knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit."

1. That life is carnal in which our spirit, meant for God, is dragged at the chariot-wheels of our lower life; and that is spiritual which is ruled and mastered by the Spirit. We must not suppose that we shall make our religion spiritual by disparaging external acts or bodily exercises of worship. No; that is spiritual which is ruled by the Spirit. The worship "in spirit and in truth," for us men who belong to the religion of the Incarnation, must be a worship "in body." But it will be spiritual if it is full of spiritual intention. Secular business, again, is spiritual if it is ruled by the Divine Spirit according to the law of righteousness. Politics are spiritual, commercial and municipal life are spiritual, art and science are spiritual, and everything that develops our faculties is spiritual, if we will allow the Divine Spirit to rule in all according to the law of righteousness, truth,

and beauty. For the whole of our being, with all its sum of faculties, is made by God, and meant for God.

2. We see from the context of the passage before us, how the carnal mind manifests itself.

(1) It minds the things of the flesh. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh" (verse 5). To mind them is to be intent upon them, to be engrossed by them. They stand first in the affections; and the "things of Jesus Christ" are nowhere. Thoughts, views, likings, desires, aims, and pursuits are all carnal.

(2) It is enmity against God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (verse 7). It will accept an ideal God, a God of its own invention, a God who will wink at sin, and clear the guilty. But it hates the holy God revealed in the Bible. It has no liking for His people, His day, His word, or His salvation.

(3) It is in open rebellion against God. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (verse 7). Moral indisposition and moral incapacity are here conjoined. The carnal mind is not only disinclined to render to God any such obedience as He can accept, but is incapable of doing so.

Give us the earth's whole heart but once to know
But once to pierce the secret of the Spring,—
Give us our fill,—so we at end may go
Into the starless night unmurmuring.

Gold lights that beckon down the dusky way,
Where loud wheels roll, impetuous, through the night;
The lamp-lit leaves, the maddening airs of May,
The heady wine of living, dark and bright.

Give us of these, and we are blest in truth;
The wandering foot, the keen, unflagging zest,
One with the glorious world's eternal youth,
Of all that is, and is not, first and best.

Ah, vain desire, our straitened years to mar!
Troubled we turn and listen unreleased,
To music of a revel held afar,
Evasive echoes of a distant feast.[1]

[1] Rosamund M. Watson.

iii. Death.

What is death? We may define death in its first aspect as *ceasing to be*, the cessation of existence; but if in physical death we ask what is the cause of the cessation of existence, we plainly perceive that it is not the cessation of the existence of the body, or even the decomposition of its material substances, but the absence in them of the principle of life. That principle keeps decay and decomposition at bay in the material form in which it resides, and death, or the absence of the principle of life, must take place before decay can commence. The spirit which gives beauty, expression, and activity to the body, and manifests itself through the body, must be separated from the body, and this *separation* is death. Consequently, on account of the strict analogy between physical and moral things, the word death is used throughout the New Testament as a term for moral separation—as "dead unto the law," "dead unto sin," etc.—meaning thereby that persons thus dead are separated from the power and principle of these things. But it is especially in connexion with the death which is the consequence of sin that the expression is used. Thus the Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, says, "You hath he quickened," *i.e.* given life to, "who were dead in trespasses and sins"; and the meaning of this is clearly defined by a parallel passage, as in Eph. ii. 11, 12, "Ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, without Christ, alien" (*i.e.* dead to, or separated) "from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God" (or separated from, or dead to, God) "in the world." Again, speaking of the Gentiles generally, the Apostle describes them as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated" (or separated) "from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." And, again, writing to the Colossians, he says, "And you who were sometime alienated and enemies" (*i.e.* separated or dead) "in your mind through wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." Sin thus produces alienation and enmity towards God, or, in other words, a moral separation between the sinner and God, which is spiritual death; and the contrary to this is to be quickened, or given life, *i.e.* to be reconciled to God.

¶ All the peoples and nations around Paul had borne witness that to follow the flesh was to make life hasten toward the end, and to an end inglorious. The glutton and drunkard and libertine, the man of violence, the man of wicked ambition, the brutalized criminal, all these marched along then even more shamelessly than they do in our age, and had made him realize that the passions of the flesh lead to death. In his time many a Herod was dying before his day; many an Antony and Cleopatra were hurrying through their careers; many a prodigal was spending his substance in riotous living; many thousands of young men were dying violent deaths; and as he viewed this spectacle, the philosophy of the hour came back with force to Paul's bosom that the passions of the flesh lead to death, the passions of the spirit lead toward life. In the opening chapter of this letter to the Romans, there is a picture of Roman morals, and in that condition of society you will find the cause of that great generalization that the flesh brings ruin, the spirit brings triumph. What were the battles of Alexander and of the Cæsars but a fleshly vanity, gratifying itself in the tumult and blood of carnage, and in the applause which rewarded the conqueror?[1]

II.

Spiritual Mindedness.

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

i. The Spirit.

When St. Paul speaks of the mind of the Spirit in a man, he speaks of the entrance of a new factor, the Divine energy, into his inner life. He gives various descriptions of the experience. These are all involved ideally in the first genuine contact of the soul with God in Christ through faith. When the soul recognizes the love of God in Christ as the Saviour, and appropriates that forgiving love by faith, it is brought into touch with God as living, and dealing with it. There is now a new moral centre of the personal life. Yet we must not conceive the Divine Spirit as becoming identified with the subjective, regenerated life of the believer. For the Apostle always regards the Divine energy as continuing to act on the life of the believer as a distinct objective power.

[1] D. Swing.

ii. The Mind of the Spirit.

What, then, is this mind of the Spirit or spiritual-mindedness?

1. *It is not the same thing as being religious.* A man may be exceedingly religious, exceedingly orthodox in his creed and punctilious in observing the forms of piety, and still have anything but a spiritual mind. Too sadly true it is that the priests and ecclesiastics and religious teachers of the world are not always the prophets of God. Men may deal in holy things and miss the holy vision. They may say, "Lord, Lord," and know nothing of the mind of Christ. It was so in Israel; it has been so again and again in the Christian Church. Ages of ecclesiastical revival and of great religious activity are not necessarily ages of deep spiritual insight. God's prophets and seers are quite as apt to come clad in goat's hair and leathern girdles as in the more conventional millinery. How easy it is, in the Christian life as everywhere else, to mistake the form for the substance, the chaff for the wheat.

2. And, whatever it is, *it is not the same thing as moral goodness* —not quite the same. One may be *very* good, very kind, honourable, benevolent, and tender-hearted without being spiritual in one's mind. Spirituality is moral excellence with something added. That additional something is what heat is to light. Has spirituality anything to do with one's occupation in life? Is it a thing of temperament, or circumstances, or will? Is it something that men achieve, as they would win a fortune or acquire an education? Or is it a Divine gift, a supernatural bestowment, which only those have, or can have, who have had certain religious experiences?

3. The first feeling about spirituality, before it can come to any good and healthy growth, must be that it penetrates everywhere. There are not certain objects only for the spiritual mind to exercise itself upon, but every subject has its spiritual side; and each man carries for himself the responsibility as to whether he will deal spiritually or unspiritually with everything which the Lord puts in his way. For the truth is for ever true, and yet for ever forgotten, that spirituality is a quality of the human soul, and not of the things that the soul deals with. And

so there is nothing high or low which the soul may not deal with spiritually or unspiritually, as it will.

(1) To begin with our worship. Worship is sanctified and intensified by this inward vision of God. "God is the king of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding" (Ps. xlvii. 7). "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Cor. xiv. 15). Neither the vain conceits of human philosophy, nor the outward show of ceremony, must come between our souls and God; or hinder the knitting together and concentration of all our hearts' affections and powers upon the exaltation of His holy Name.

(2) In the use and application of the Scriptures we do not adapt them to our theories, or wrest words from their contexts to prove our point—mistaking for God's guidance the tenacious grasp of our own will upon some isolated phrase out of God's Word, as if it held the whole truth unbalanced by the teaching of other passages. But we yield sensitively to the Spirit's leading as He orders our steps in the Word, reproving or correcting us, instructing us in righteousness or in doctrine, as He may see fit; bringing us through the Scriptures into living contact with God Himself, and forming in us the mind of Christ. Nevermore can we rest satisfied with the mere "form of knowledge and of the truth," even though our familiarity with the "letter" of Scripture may have grown to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and we may have become the teachers of others. From henceforth our hearts cry out for the living God in His Word, to hear His voice, to seek His face, to understand the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him.

(3) We learn to find God in everything. We perceive His power and purpose in the very things which before appalled or perplexed us; we trace His wisdom and His hand at work in nature, in providence, and in grace; being ever drawn closer to His heart in *love*, and more deeply convinced of the reasonableness and simplicity of *faith*. Visible and material things do not absorb or terrify us as before; or blind our minds to the light. The consciousness of God, and of the unseen forces at work for our provision and protection, are more real to our spiritual sense than are the things which are seen and passing, to our natural sight.

(4) A new inspiration enters into our prayer life, if this illumination of heart is ours through the Spirit and the Word. Our ignorance of how and what we should pray for as we ought is exchanged for the pleading of the Holy Ghost in and through us according to the will of God, "the mind of the Spirit" which is "the mind of Christ," stirring within us such prayer as God has pledged Himself to answer.

(5) Surely, also, as we learn to know and understand our God more, we shall not rest satisfied with knowledge only. It must become experimental, fruitful; translated into a living factor and force in character and life. Every fresh view of Christ will become a new motive power within us for practical daily progress. Any opening of our understanding to apprehend the exceeding greatness of the Spirit's power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, will mean a quickened faith to believe in the mighty power of the same Spirit of holiness to work in us and to energize us to more abundant life and hallowed service. Yet in that service how careful shall we be to run only when and where we are "sent" by our Lord; and to wait on God for clear instructions that we may understand His pattern for the work, as well as His appointed time and method and means for its execution, by the writing of His Spirit upon us.

¶ You say there is another kind of intelligence that men lawfully respect, which is called *shrewdness*, or practical acquaintance with affairs. But is not that, too, provided for in the New Testament? Do you suppose it was irrespective of their practical experience among men, that Christ chose His first disciples, the foremost representatives of His truth, from among tax-gatherers, fishermen, tent-makers, and physicians? Or will you look through literature or biography, or the marts of commerce, or the boards of the exchange, for a shrewder insight into all the ways and windings of human nature than lurked in the sharp eye and wakeful perception of that leading Apostle, who turned the world upside down with his calm hand, carried his points with the dignitaries of provinces, foiled Felix and Agrippa, foresaw and forearmed himself against all that men could do to him, and in his Epistles tears open even the most cunning wrappages of self-deception with his holy satire,—conquering Greek sophists and Roman disciplinarians with weapons out of their own quiver?

You instance *courage*; and is there not enough of that in that

pioneering rank of the "noble army of martyrs," whom there was no dungeon dark enough to terrify from Jerusalem to Rome, and who would not blench, or even revile or murmur, under all the scourges of Jewry, the whips of dainty Philippi, or the lion's teeth in the Roman amphitheatre?

Generosity, you say, is manly; but who will so disown his own reason as to confess he finds no generosity in that faith whose primal lesson is self-sacrifice, whose chosen badge and emblem is a cross, and which was taught and sealed by Him who gave His very life for the life of His followers?

You mention *hospitality*; and is not hospitality enjoined, with repetition and emphasis, by both Paul and Peter, as the attribute of saints, the grace of bishops, and the duty of all believers?

Of *patriotism*; and who was He that cried, weeping, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! if thou hadst known how often I would have gathered thy children"?

Of the taste and love for the *beautiful*; but whose finger was that which pointed most admiringly, as He discoursed, to the summer glories, the waving wheat and nodding lilies, the trees and lakes and gorgeous skies of Palestine?—whose eye, that rested with sweetest satisfaction on the affluent and varied scenery?—whose word, that blended the mystic openings of the sunrise with the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and so taught us how the relish of all that is sublime or lovely should rise at last and culminate in the worship of the Father, even as every manly and heroic quality is perfected only in the soul that is united to the Son?[1]

¶ In one of the bright books of the day, I find a courageous and impulsive young English fox-hunter saying to a clerical Oxford cousin: "I feel that the exercise of freedom, activity, foresight, daring, independent self-determination, even in a few minutes' burst across country, strengthens me in mind as well as in body. It sweeps away the web of self-consciousness. As for bad company, when those that have renounced the world give up speculating in the stocks, you may quote pious people's opinions. We fox-hunters see that the 'religious world' is much like the 'great world,' and the 'sporting world,' and the 'literary world'; and that, because this happens to be a money-making country, and money-making is an effeminate pursuit, therefore all sedentary sins, like covetousness, slander, bigotry, and self-conceit, are to be plastered over, while the more masculine vices are hunted down by your cold-blooded religionists. Be sure that, as long as

[1] F. D. Huntington.

you make piety a synonym for this weak morality, you will never convert me or any other good sportsman."[1]

4. One of the strangest things about this character of spiritual-mindedness is the way in which so many people think of it negatively instead of positively. To them, to be a spiritual man simply means to be incapable of the occupations and pleasures which make up most of their own life. There are many of the boldest struggles of ambition and the most applauded victories of popularity of which a man becomes incapable when he takes to himself the new life of spiritual-mindedness; as the artist, who learns to do sweet and subtle things with his fingers, finds those fingers incapable of wielding sledge-hammers, or lifting blocks of granite. And it is often hard, because of the worship we have for mere capacity independently of the value of the task which it can do, for one to own that his struggle after spirituality makes him incapable of many things which the world thinks it most fine and glorious to do. But think of the Divine incapacity of Christ! We dwell with wonder upon all that He could do, but it seems scarcely less wonderful to think of all that He could not do. He could not turn aside for ease and comfort; He could not covet the world the devil showed him; He could not be tempted into bigotry or tortured into rage. When we succeed in making Him our standard, we shall know that there are inabilities as glorious and honourable as any ability can be. It is better always to be incapable of cheating and lying than to be capable of chivalrously laying down one's life in some great stress of duty. But there is no less a positive power of spirituality; and that is most clearly seen in the way in which it brings out the best colours of the best experiences and thoughts of men; and the growth of a man from unspiritual to spiritual existence is largely witnessed by the way in which his virtues graduate from the partial to the perfect life.

¶ You have struggled for personal purity against all the temptations of the flesh; you have fortified the castle of your will with every worldly bulwark—respectability, shame, ambition, health; you have struggled and you have conquered. But has not something better often hovered before you as a possibility, when, in a new spiritual-mindedness, purity should not be the

[1] F. D. Huntington.

poor, half-vital, fluttering thing that you have brought out of your conflict, but strong and luxuriant, full of life and peace? As that picture has come out before you, you have dreamed of heaven, where purity shall not be a struggle of the will, but a delight and passion of the soul. Ah, yes, it must come in heaven. It cannot come till heaven come. Only remember that spiritual-mindedness *is* heaven, come when it will; and if it come here and now, then here and now purity may catch this holier light, and be the perfect thing that it will be in the heaven that is to come.[1]

> For what is freedom but the unfettered use
> Of all the powers that God for use has given?
> But chiefly this,—Him first, Him last, to view
> Through meaner powers and secondary things
> Effulgent, as through clouds that veil His blaze.

iii. Life.

"Life" and "peace" are two words which certainly express the best desires of the best men. To be alive, to have all one's powers in full activity; and to be at peace, to be free from distress and tumult and uncertainty—give a man both of these, and what is there left for him to desire? St. Paul tells us that the door to this perfect existence is spiritual-mindedness.

1. Israel had a full share of the natural and spontaneous life of antiquity. It lasted long, and it revived once and again after times of decline. But the life of Israel was lived in the presence of the Lord God; it was always subordinate to obedience and faith towards One above. He was always known as walking among the trees of man's garden, a joy and glory to the worshipper, a terror to the transgressor. The sense of life which Israel enjoyed was, however, best expressed in the choice of the name "life" as a designation of that higher communion with God which grew forth in due time as the fruit of obedience and faith. The psalmist or wise man or prophet, whose heart had sought the face of the Lord, was conscious of a second or Divine life of which the first or natural life was at once the image and the foundation; a life not imprisoned in some secret recess of his soul, but filling his whole self, and overflowing upon the earth around him. It

[1] Phillips Brooks.

did not estrange him from the natural life which he shared with other men or with lower creatures, and which he was taught to regard as proceeding from God's own breath or spirit. But it withheld him from seeking satisfaction within the lower life alone: and it made itself known not as a Divinely ordained substitute for life, for the sake of which life must be forgone; but as itself a life indeed, the crown of all life.

¶ Among the most intensely spiritual lives in England in our time I should certainly put Ruskin and Tennyson and Browning. What did these men live for? They lived to spiritualize the conception of life, to break down the power of vulgar materialist ambitions. What is the keynote of Ruskin's social reform? Just this: that man is a *spirit*, not a mere body, nor a machine, but a spirit—a being with Divine life in him, and destined for high ends. By the needs of man's spiritual nature Ruskin would arrange his daily work and his wages; his political economy was a protest against the materialization of that science, and a plea for making it the science of man instead of a science of mere external wealth. You might almost sum up Ruskin's teaching in the words of Jesus: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."[1]

2. What is St. Paul's conception of Life?

(1) In many passages he uses "life" in the more or less colloquial sense of existence in the world: *e.g.* 1 Cor. xv. 19, "If in this life only we have hoped in Christ."

(2) At the other extremity, life has for him the definite sense of a future reward or boon which God will bestow. This may be designated as its "eschatological" usage. In this sense, life is generally qualified by the adjective eternal. The phrase invariably denotes life looked at in prospect, in its complete realization. Thus in Rom. ii. 7, life is the recompense of perseverance in righteous conduct and of the quest for glory and immortality; in Rom. v. 21, it is the goal and aim of the reign of grace through Jesus Christ; in Rom. vi. 22, it expresses the end or climax of the life of freedom from sin and bondage to God, and hence it is further defined as the gift of God (in contrast with the wages of sin) in Christ Jesus.

(3) But St. Paul always regards life as a *present* possession of the believer. As such, it is the direct result of the indwelling

[1] T. R. Williams.

of the Holy Spirit, and may even be termed the actual presence of the Spirit in the human personality. Most typical instances are: Rom. viii. 2, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death"; viii. 6, "The mind of the spirit is life and peace" (the present text); and viii. 10, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

3. The new life is a renewal of the old from its very foundations. It is a renewal not of one part, but of the whole. It embraces the physical as well as the ethical or religious. For St. Paul, the sum of the believer's experiences is a unity. Life included the totality of his energies. It cannot be divided up into provinces, of which one may be contrasted with another. Its only contrast lies in Death. Death for the Apostle means the ruin of the whole personality. Life means its triumphant continuance in the power of the Spirit beyond the barriers of earth and time, in conformity with the nature of the glorified Christ, who is the image of the invisible God.

Spirit! whose various energies
  By dew and flame denoted are,
By rain from the world-covering skies,
  By rushing and by whispering air;

Be Thou to us, O gentlest one,
  The brimful river of sweet peace,
Sunshine of the celestial sun
  Restoring air of sacred ease.

Life of our life, since life of Him
  By whom we live eternally,
Our heart is faint, our eye is dim,
  Till Thou our spirit purify.

The purest airs are strongest too,
  Strong to enliven and to heal:
O Spirit purer than the dew,
  Thine holiness in strength reveal.

Felt art Thou, and the heavy heart
  Grows cheerful and makes bright the eyes;
Up from the dust the enfeebled start,
  Armed and re-nerved for victories:

Felt art Thou, and relieving tears
Fall, nourishing our young resolves:
Felt art Thou, and our icy fears
The sunny smile of love dissolves.

O Spirit, when Thy mighty wind
The entombing rocks of sin hath rent,
Lead shuddering forth the awakened mind
In still voice whispering Thine intent.

As to the sacred light of day
The stranger soul shall trembling come,
Say, "These thy friends," and "This thy way,"
And "Yonder thy celestial home."[1]

iv. Peace.

St. Paul never begins an epistle without a salutation containing the word "peace." And in the body of his teaching "peace" plays a conspicuous part. God is a "God of *peace*." The Christian has "*peace* with God." "To be spiritually minded is life and *peace*." It is obvious that he lays much stress on the possession of this golden treasure of inward peace. With him it implies the removal of the guilt that separated us from God, the assurance of pardon, and the conformity of our will to His.

The peace which the Apostle has in mind consists of two elements: (1) the state of reconciliation with God; and (2) the sense of that reconciliation, which diffuses a feeling of harmony and tranquillity over the whole man.

1. *Reconciliation.* When the merit of Christ's atoning sacrifice becomes ours, peace, sweet, satisfying, eternal peace, floods the soul. This is Christ's promise. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The world's peace is the peace of compromise; Christ's is the peace of reconciliation. It is the peace of reconciliation that is musical. It is a song that can be sung only in sight of Calvary's bloodstained cross, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Without an altar of atonement there can be no song of reconciliation.

[1] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet*, 1.

I sought for Peace, but could not find;
  I sought it in the city,
But they were of another mind,—
  The more's the pity.
I sought for Peace of country swain,
  But yet I could not find;
So I, returning home again,
  Left Peace behind.
Sweet Peace, where dost thou dwell? said I;—
  Methought a voice was given,
"Peace dwelt not here, long since did fly
  To God in heaven."
Thought I, this echo is but vain,
  To folly 'tis of kin;
Anon, I heard it tell me plain,
  'Twas killed by sin.
Then I believed the former voice,
  And rested well content;
Lay down and slept, rose, did rejoice,
  And then to Heaven went.
There I enquired for Peace, and found it true:—
An heavenly plant it was, and sweetly grew.

2. *Tranquillity.* There are certain elements in this peace of mind of which we can speak with some confidence.

(1) First we may be sure that it is the peace that comes of love, of love to God and man, free and abounding. What has peace to do with love, do you ask? Surely a great deal to do with it. For why are men so often not at rest within? Why do so many things trouble them and vex them? Why is there so much distraction of mind, so much bitterness of heart? Most certainly it is, in no small measure, because their love is so limited. There is no full stream that flows out from them towards all around them. That explains their unrest. It is the man who loves without stint that has learned the secret of the deepest peace.

(2) Again, it is the peace of perfect trust. Our want of peace is very often just want of confidence. We are not at ease in our mind, because we are not sure of those on whom some interests that are dear to us depend. We are not sure of ourselves. Great responsibilities are entrusted to our wisdom and skill; but we are not sure whether we are wise enough,

or clever enough, to carry the business committed to us to a successful issue. Or we are not sure of some other persons who have under their control things that are of great value in our eyes. We are not sure of the captain of the ship in which we are sailing, or of the lawyer who is conducting our case, or of the doctor under whose charge we have placed ourselves. Or we are not sure of God, and of His wise and righteous government of the world. And the consequence is that we are nervous and restless. Everything would be different if we were more trustful. We may be dwelling in the midst of noise, and strife, and confusion, and yet we will not be disturbed or anxious if we believe in those who are at the helm any more than we would be anxious, amid all the racket and disorder incident to the building of a great house, if we had reason to trust the architect and contractor. To have peace, we must have faith.

(3) Once more, this peace is the peace of those who are fully occupied. There are other powers belonging to us besides the powers by which we love and trust; and our unrest in this world is due, in part, to the fact that these powers are not employed or only imperfectly employed. It is not our labours but our limitations which keep us in a state of disquietude. There is never such a sensation of perfect bodily contentment as when all the powers of the body are in full play, and yet not painfully fatigued or overstrained. And there is never such spiritual rest as when all the powers of the spirit have been brought fully into operation, and a man is, so to speak, carried wholly out of himself, and every part of him is engaged in the work for which it is fitted, and for which it was created. That is the rest of Heaven. There, they serve Him night and day. There, room is found, and opportunity, for every man, and not only for every man, but for every gift and power with which every man has been endowed.

¶ The same Apostle who describes the peace of God as passing all understanding is he who laboured more abundantly than all. Let St. Paul be our type. Peace—the peace which Christ has left us—is not only consistent with the manifold occupations, energies, interests, cares of life; but through and in these we must seek it.[1]

[1] J. B. Lightfoot.

We ask for Peace, O Lord!
  Thy children ask Thy Peace;
Not what the world calls rest,
  That toil and care should cease,
That through bright sunny hours
  Calm Life should fleet away,
And tranquil night should fade
  In smiling day;—
  It is not for such Peace that we would pray.

We ask for Peace, O Lord!
  Yet not to stand secure,
Girt round with iron Pride,
  Contented to endure:
Crushing the gentle strings
  That human hearts should know,
Untouched by others' joy
  Or others' woe;—
  Thou, O dear Lord, wilt never teach us so.

We ask Thy Peace, O Lord!
  Through storm, and fear, and strife,
To light and guide us on,
  Through a long, struggling life:
While no success or gain
  Shall cheer the desperate fight,
Or nerve, what the world calls
  Our wasted might;—
  Yet pressing through the darkness to the light.

It is Thine own, O Lord,
  Who toil while others sleep;
Who sow with loving care
  What other hands shall reap.
They lean on Thee entranced,
  In calm and perfect rest:
Give us that Peace, O Lord,
  Divine and blest,
  Thou keepest for those hearts who love Thee best.[1]

[1] Adelaide A. Procter.

The Owner's Mark.

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The Owner's Mark.

If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.—Rom. viii. 9.

This is one of the most searching passages that can be found in the Bible. It takes hold of the question of our salvation in a very substantial and thorough manner. It removes utterly, almost infinitely, from this problem of our destiny, all shadow of uncertainty or of doubt. It brings us squarely to the facts in our character. On the force of this Scripture we are lifted to a platform where we stand with our hearts uncovered and naked before the eye of God.

¶ I never read this Scripture in the presence of a Christian congregation without feeling that I have in some way chopped down through every heart with a great broad axe. There is no whitewashing in this passage: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Not, "He will do tolerably well, but not quite so well as he might do"; not that he will get on after a fashion, and have quite a respectable entrance into the city of the great King, though he may not push quite so far towards the front as he might have done if he had had the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Not that at all; but, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, there is not the remotest shadow of a chance for him: "he is none of his."[1]

I.

What is the Spirit of Christ?

1. In the earlier part of this verse it is called "the Spirit of God"—"ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." It is therefore the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of God" because God is the original source, "the Spirit of Christ" because Christ is the immediate channel and occasion of His gift to men.

[1] C. H. Fowler.

¶ When our Lord entered upon His Ministry, He acted as though He were a mere man, needing grace, and received the consecration of the Holy Spirit for our sakes. He became the Christ, or Anointed, that the Spirit might be seen to come from God, and to pass from Him to us. And, therefore, the heavenly Gift is not simply called the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, that we might clearly understand that He comes to us from and instead of Christ.[1]

2. This Holy Spirit *dwells* in us as in a temple. He pervades us as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume the folds of some honourable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in Him, and He in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvellous, far above the possession of mere gifts; exalts him inconceivably in the scale of being and gives him a place and an office which he had not before. In St. Peter's forcible language, he becomes "partaker of the Divine Nature," and has "power" or authority, as St. John says, "to become the son of God." Or, to use the words of St. Paul, "he is a new creation; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His rank is new; his parentage and service are new. He is "of God," and "is not his own," "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

3. Given without measure to Jesus, the Spirit of God, called also the Spirit of Christ, is given in measure to those that belong to Jesus. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Thus the Holy Spirit, that Life from God which came into the world in Jesus, and so changed and uplifted and refreshed the spirit of man, flows on into other men. Therefore He is called the Spirit of Life. Christians are said to have received this life. It is described as "Life indeed." To lack the Spirit is to be separated from the Life of God.

¶ I think that this thought, great as it is, is simple enough for each of us—that the Holy Spirit is the name of that holy *Life* which passes from God into us. That this should be so is more than we could have asked or thought, but it is not more or other than what fits with splendid fitness what in our own spirit we know and feel (though we hardly dare own it) that we are meant for some real union and communion with God.[2]

[1] J. H. Newman. [2] Bishop E. S. Talbot.

II.

The Possession of the Spirit of Christ

1. The possession of the Spirit of Christ is the test of belonging to Christ. And how is it known that a man possesses the Spirit of Christ? A man possesses the Spirit of Christ if he manifests the mind or character of Christ. For just as the anointing of the Spirit enabled Christ to live His life of perfect obedience and true holiness, so in the measure in which the Spirit of Christ dwells in a man will he bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, which are the component parts of the Christian character. Here, then, is the test of Christianity. If a man have not the spirit, the tone, the temper, the character of Christ, he is none of His. Not the words that I recite as a creed, not the service that I render as a church member—these things do not prove my relation to Christ—but what I am in temper, in tone, in spirit, in character. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

¶ I pray you, attempt to correct the circumference of your life from the centre; do not attempt to correct the centre from the circumference—that is, do not attempt to correct your spirit by altering your habits. Correct your habits by an alteration of the spirit. And how is the spirit to be altered? Only by the true, whole-hearted, unquestioning abandonment of your whole being to the Spirit of God will it be possible for you to have the Spirit of Christ.[1]

2. Character is the deepest fact of human life. There can be no final and satisfactory analysis of it; there can be no final and satisfactory statement of what character is. It is the essential truth concerning a man. The word means originally and simply an engraving, something written upon, carved into; and the man's character is the truth about the man written upon his personality, to be read constantly and clearly by God, to be deciphered slowly and blunderingly by his fellow-men; but it is the fact, the essential fact, concerning a man.

¶ It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who once said: "Gentlemen, I cannot hear what you say for listening to what you are." That is very often the case. Speech is constantly discounted by conduct,

[1] G. C. Morgan.

and profession is cancelled by the contradictory character that lies behind it.

III.

Some Characteristics of the Spirit of Christ.

If we are to be tested by the possession of the Spirit of Christ, we must have some clear conception as to what that Spirit is. Can we analyze it so far as to gather some conception as to its component parts?

It may be said that the Spirit of Christ is summed up in the one word *Love*. But we are bound to break the thought of love up, and notice how in Christ love expresses itself. What are the facts that, woven into perfect warp and woof, make up the fine and delicate texture of His Spirit?

¶ Can there be a doubt as to the Spirit of Christ set forth in His teaching? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." All religion comes to that: those are its high and final words. A filial soul in communion with the Father, a fraternal soul in communion with humanity. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." That is, surely without controversy, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." And clear as His teaching is, that Spirit of Christ is yet more evident in His life.[1]

1. Take *Gentleness* first. The chief element of gentleness is self-restraint, the power to check those natural tendencies to self-assertion in its various forms of pride or bluster or fretfulness, not to speak of the more obvious faults of malice and bitterness. And then there is fairness of judgment, a kindly allowance for faults in others which a very little thought would show to be serious enough in ourselves, a consideration for the feelings of others. In these days of what some people would consider over-refinement, there is special need for this. Delicacy of sentiment makes men peculiarly liable to sensitiveness. The common courtesies of society are not always a sufficient remedy against

[1] B. J. Snell.

this, because they may be merely the conventional veneer which hides very real unkindness. Nothing can be more unkind than rudeness expressed in honeyed words of transparent insincerity. Christian gentleness means gentleness of feeling, real kindness of heart. It will generally show itself in gentleness of manner, but gentleness of manner is by no means a substitute for it.

¶ A few months ago I read one of those exquisite little articles by Dr. George Matheson. In this particular one he spoke of the gentleness of God, and he said a thing about gentleness that I did not know before. He said this about gentleness: "Gentleness is power in reserve, in check." Said Dr. Matheson, "We speak of the gentleness of the brook, and it is a false figure. The brook has no gentleness; the brook is beautiful but not gentle; noisy, not gentle. It laughs over the stones and runs through its banks of moss and fern. While men may come and men may go the brook runs on for ever. But it is making all the noise it can, and it is exerting all the force it can. You cannot get more force out of it than it is exerting as it runs. There is no gentleness in the brook. You may talk, if you will, of the gentleness of the mighty river, the river that, if it once but breaks and bursts its banks, would devastate the whole countryside, yet it quietly and gently carries its burden on its bosom to the sea, and you hardly know it is strong. That is gentleness." Oh, the gentleness of Jesus! What said He? Know ye not that I could ask of My Father, and He could straightway give Me ten legions of angels to fight My battles? All power behind Him, but He left it there and took His way, a perpetual outshining of gentleness; power in check, held back.[1]

¶ A gentleman's first characteristic is that fineness of structure in the body which renders it capable of the most delicate sensation; and of structure in the mind which renders it capable of the most delicate sympathies—one may say, simply "fineness of nature." This is, of course, compatible with heroic bodily strength and mental firmness; in fact, heroic strength is not conceivable without such delicacy. Elephantine strength may drive its way through a forest and feel no touch of the boughs; but the white skin of Homer's Atrides would have felt a bent rose-leaf, yet subdue its feeling in glow of battle, and behave itself like iron. I do not mean to call an elephant a vulgar animal; but if you think about him carefully you will find that his non-vulgarity consists in such gentleness as is possible to elephantine nature; not in his insensitive hide, nor in his clumsy

[1] G. C. Morgan.

foot, but in the way he will lift his foot if a child lies in his way; and in his sensitive trunk, and still more sensitive mind, and capability of pique on points of honour. Hence it will follow that one of the probable signs of high-breeding in men generally will be their kindness and mercifulness.[1]

¶ The only guarantee of gentleness is to observe the golden rule of the Gospel. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them." Put yourself into their position, and see how you would like to be treated. But then there is a real difficulty sometimes in putting this into practice. What are we to do, you will say, when people have really injured us, and we feel obliged to let them know, not that we exactly resent it, for we really wish to be kind, but that we have been pained? I should say, in nine cases out of ten, better not to let them know it at all. A gentle example has far greater force than the kindest rebuke. In the rare cases in which it is absolutely necessary to explain your feelings, speak as plainly and directly as you can, remembering that a parade even of gentleness may be extremely provoking. You may be assuming thereby a position of moral superiority which has the appearance, perhaps the reality, of affectation. The relations of Christians to each other require an infinity of tact, and may I not add an infinity of common sense? One thing we may be sure of, that the person who is really kind and really courteous is seldom taken advantage of except by the ignorant and foolish, and these he can generally afford, I won't say to despise, but at any rate to bear with.[2]

¶ A German with a trained musical ear came a stranger into an American city. He heard the voice of song, and following the sound, found himself where they were singing psalmody in a nasal and discordant way. After he had entered, he wished he were outside, and he did not know whether he ought to put his hands over his ears and so show his disgust, or rush out of the hall; but being too well bred to do either, he determined to endure it as best he could. And while he was sitting there, he discerned a woman's voice, clear and sweet, singing in exact tune. She was not trying to drown all the rest; nor, on the other hand, was she at all disturbed or her melody at all marred by the discords around her; she just kept singing that sweet, pure note of concord, until at last it became infectious, and the others began to fall in with it; and it was not long before the whole company was singing in perfect harmony, influenced by the example of that one voice.

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, pt. ix. ch. 7. [2] F. H. Woods.

2. *Strength.* Next to the spirit of gentleness, comes the spirit of power. To some these would seem to be antagonists. The one appears to them as the natural and proper character of woman, the other of man. But surely it is not so. If there is any truth in such a view it is that gentleness is the quality which men need most to learn; power, force of moral character, what women too often lack. But certainly the two are not opposed to each other. Christian gentleness does not mean weakness of character, nor is strength of character at all the same thing as rudeness, nor yet as obstinacy. Rather is it the very opposite; at any rate, gentleness is essential to all true strength. Composure of mind, a quiet determination to do what is right, a readiness to overlook personal wrong, above all, an infinite store of patience, these are what give a man or woman an influence in the world; and the nobler the work is the truer all this becomes. For there is an attractiveness about sweetness of temper which draws us to those who have it. And the attractiveness is all the greater when we realize that that sweetness is the fruit of an earnest desire to live the Christian life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

O, east is east and west is west and never twain shall meet
Till earth and sky stand presently at God's great judgment seat;
But there is neither east nor west, border, nor breed, nor birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth![1]

¶ It takes the greatest strength to speak quietly. It takes rarely disciplined strength to bring the softest music out of organ or piano. It is quite likely that, speaking offhand, one would say that the eagle is the most powerful of all flying birds. And yet a little thought and reading bring to the mind the fact that, though actually so powerful, its relative strength is really inferior to that of the humming-bird. This smallest of birds can perform a feat of strength quite impossible to the powerful eagle. It holds itself steadily poised in mid-air as it quietly sips its honey-food from the hanging flower. Its very calmness and steadiness and delicacy of action reveal the superbness of its strength. The strength that reveals itself most in gentleness and tenderness

[1] Kipling.

and keenly alert patience, in subdued tone, and soft touch, and quiet step, is the real, strong strength that wins the hardest fight.[1]

3. *Sympathy.* Sympathy is the power of love that enables you sometimes to make a pilgrimage outside the small circle of your own personality. If the majority of people were asked for a definition of sympathy, they would answer, "Sorrow for those who are in sorrow." That is a splendid half-definition. Sympathy is not only the power that makes it possible for you to weep with me when I weep, it is the power that makes it possible for you to laugh with me when I laugh. That is apostolic, that is Christian—"Weeping with those who weep, rejoicing with those who rejoice." It is not by any means certain that the latter half is not the more difficult.

¶ Sympathy is a thing to be encouraged, apart from human considerations, because it supplies us with the materials for wisdom. It is probably more instructive to entertain a sneaking kindness for any unpopular person . . . than to give way to perfect raptures of moral indignation against his abstract vices.[2]

I will not tell you of the things I know,
I cannot bar the path that you must go;
God's bitter lesson must be learnt by all,
But living, I will listen to your call,
And stretch to you a hand that you may know.[3]

¶ Sister Dora, after her long day's work in her Walsall hospital for waifs and strays, for poor souls beaten down in the battle of life, often went to rest almost too tired to sleep. But over her head was a bell, to be sounded, in spite of all her weariness, when any sufferer needed her. And the bell bore this inscription, "The Master is come and calleth for thee."[4]

¶ I was very much struck not long ago to hear a very clever and a very energetic and a well-known woman reply, when asked what she thought of the question about her sisters and the Empire Music Hall, "Oh, I am too busy over political questions to think about that; it does not touch me."[5]

¶ One day in Charleston Jail a minister came to call on John Brown and defended slavery as a Christian institution. "My dear

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 102.
[2] R. L. Stevenson, *Some Portraits of Raeburn.*
[3] Philip Bourke Marston, *Song-Tide*, 41.
[4] B. J. Snell. [5] C. M. Holden, *The Warfare of Girlhood*, 48.

sir," said the old man, "you know nothing about Christianity. You will have to learn its *a b c*; I find you quite ignorant of what the word Christianity means." And when the man looked at him very much disconcerted, John Brown softened a little: "I respect you as a gentleman, of course, but it is as a *heathen* gentleman." And it was exactly that intensity of feeling in the old man that made him willing for the sake of his cause to lay down his life, and the heat of his passion set this land on fire.[1]

I lay my hand on your aching brow
Softly, so! And the pain grows still.
The moisture clings to my soothing palm,
And you sleep because I will.

You forget I am here? 'Tis the darkness hides.
I am always here, and your needs I know.
I tide you over the long, long night
To the shores of the morning glow.

So God's hand touches the aching soul,
Softly, so! And the pain grows still;
All grief and woe from the soul He draws,
And we rest because He wills.

We forget,—and yet He is always here!
He knows our needs and He heeds our sighs;
No night so long but He soothes and stills
Till the dawn-light rims the skies.

4. *Humility.* What a matchless view of Christ's humility we have in John xiii.—He rose from supper, laid aside His garments and took a towel, girded Himself, poured water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples' feet. Christ was on earth as one that served. Humility followed Him from His birth in the manger to His borrowed grave. We have just as much of Christianity as we have of humility.

I held the golden vessel of my soul
And prayed that God would fill it from on high.
Day after day the importuning cry
Grew stronger—grew, a heaven-accusing dole
Because no sacred waters laved my bowl.
"So full the fountain, Lord, wouldst Thou deny
The little needed for a soul's supply?
I ask but this small portion of Thy whole."

[1] R. E. Speer, *The Master of the Heart*, 198.

Then from the vast invisible Somewhere,
A voice, as one love-authorised by Him,
Spake, and the tumult of my heart was stilled.
"Who wants the waters must the bowl prepare;
Pour out the self that chokes it to the brim,
But emptied vessels from the source are filled."[1]

¶ In a very entertaining work, over which we have roared in childhood, it is stated that a point has no parts and no magnitude. Humility is the luxurious art of reducing ourselves to a point, not to a small thing or a large one, but to a thing with no size at all, so that to it all the cosmic things are what they really are—of immeasurable stature.[2]

¶ The lesson of Christ's humility is that we should be willing to take the humblest place to serve others. We need the John the Baptist spirit, not envious of the success of another, saying with our eye on the Lord, "He must increase, but I must decrease." A Christian minister said, "I was never of any use until I found out that God did not make me for a great man." High trees are commonly fruitless, and what grows on them hangs high above our reach. So we have more good of the humble servant of God who is willing to communicate what he has. The proud servant looks so high that even if he bore fruit it could not be reached by God's poor people.

Give me the lowest place; not that I dare
  Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
  Thy glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place: or if for me
  That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
  My God and love Thee so.[3]

5. *Zeal.* Christ's was a spirit of holy zeal. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." What a power Christians would be in the world if each one could honestly say with Brainerd, "Oh, that I were a flaming fire in the hands of my God!" We need at this time what the Chinese convert told the missionary

[1] E. Wheeler Wilcox.
[2] G. K. Chesterton, *The Defendant.*
[3] Christina G. Rossetti.

his people wanted, "Men with hot hearts to tell us of the love of Christ."

¶ So far as my recollection of the 1875 Session goes, I can hardly tell what was its main feature. But perhaps the most memorable incident was the Plimsoll one. Mr. Plimsoll had devoted himself to an attack on rotten ships, which he alleged were numerous, and were sent out by money-seeking owners, totally regardless of the lives of the sailors. Some of these alleged malefactors he unmistakeably pointed to, and this led to angry denials on their part. He brought in a Bill dealing with this evil, but the Government pooh-poohed it, and gave him no real assistance. So, one afternoon when the matter was under discussion, he sprang from his seat on to the floor of the House, gesticulating, shaking his fist at the Treasury Bench, shouting out something about murdering villains, and generally deporting himself like one possessed. This, of course, caused great excitement and confusion, and as he declined to retract the words about villains, he had to retire from the House, while Disraeli proposed that he be reprimanded. On this, Fawcett got up, who was always a little pompous in his style of speaking, and, alluding to the scene just enacted and kindly doing what he could for Plimsoll, said that he had "advised him to take a walk." So the reprimanding business was adjourned for a week, at the end of which time Plimsoll made an apology, which satisfied the House. But mark the result of all this. The "scene" attracted the attention of the country to the shipping scandal which Plimsoll attacked, and the Government thought it prudent at once to bring in a Bill of their own, which they carried before the end of the Session, and took great credit for, Disraeli making so much of it in a speech at the Mansion House that it was written that he had explained then—

> How the whole of his life one long effort had been
> To provide for the lives of the Merchant Marine.[1]

¶ In southern China, some years ago, in a city on the borders of the province of Hunan, I talked with a young Chinese Christian. He was a graduate of a college in the far north. He had come a thousand miles away from home to preach Christ among his own countrymen. He was one of the most intelligent Chinese Christians whom I had met. And I was asking him many questions regarding his nation, and especially regarding the life and spirit of the Chinese Christians. And when I was

[1] G. W. E. Russell's *Memoir of Sir Wilfrid Lawson*, 110.

done, he said, "Mr. Speer, you have asked me a great many questions, and some of them have been very difficult. Now, I would like to ask you one question. You know what the Christians in your country are like. Are they all men and women of burning hearts?" It was a quaint Chinese idiom of which he made use, but that was its literal translation. He desired to know if we were all of us of burning hearts. What would you have said to him? What would you have said to him about the great mass of our so-called Christians. Are we of burning hearts?[1]

'Tis not for man to trifle, life is brief
And sin is here;
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.

Not many lives, but only one have we,
One, only one,
How earnest should that one life be,
That narrow span,
Day after day spent in blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.

Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself.[2]

[1] R. E. Speer. [2] Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

The Resurrection of the Body.

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The Resurrection of the Body.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.—Rom. viii. 11.

1. "I believe in the resurrection of the body." In spite of that merciless saying of Strauss, "The last enemy which shall be destroyed is the belief of man in his own immortality," there is no hope which nestles deeper in the human heart, and none which in our day has had more wistful expression. Among a thousand people there will not be one who does not wish to cast himself with all his heart and mind into this inspiring belief, and declare his conviction, if he can, that death is not the end of all his labours, his sorrows, his endeavours, his victories, his love, but that he, a complete human being—not soul only, but body and soul—will enter into fulness of life when he passes from this world into that which encompasses us on every side.

2. Now this hope is fulfilled in Christianity. For Christianity is a revelation of energy. That is its heart of hearts. It declares the direction in which God has put out force. It professes to bring into play the full powers of the Divine will. Everything else is subordinate to that. Knowledge, for instance, is not given by it for its own sake. Nothing is told us which does not belong to and issue from the action taken on our behalf. We know God through what He does. We know Him, we see Him, in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. In that sending we learn what God is, and the sending determines and limits all our knowledge. When we go beyond what He has shown us in that mission of His Christ, we find ourselves, as much as any others, lost in an abyss. We slip off into the inane; our faculties fail us. Only in the face of Jesus Christ, only by the rigid adherence to the actual manifestation of God's will in act through Him, only in what is

there expressed through the face of Him who lived and died and rose, only so does our knowledge come.

> Even such is Time who takes in trust
> Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
> And pays us but with earth and dust;
> Who, in the dark and silent grave,
> When we have wandered all our ways,
> Shuts up the story of our days.
> But from that earth, that grass, that dust,
> The Lord shall raise me up, I trust![1]

I.

Resurrection.

1. The word most commonly used in the New Testament for rising from the dead is the verb *egeiro*, "to awaken." The angel awakened Peter, and the disciples awakened Jesus (Acts xii. 7; Mark iv. 38). Joseph awakened from his dream, and took Jesus to Egypt, and back to the land of Israel (Matt. ii. 13, 14, 20, 21). Here and often elsewhere the English versions have the verb "arise," but the arising is only a suggested meaning. Probably the word could be uniformly translated "awaked," and in many instances with the effect of rendering the sense more vivid. Read through the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, substituting "awaken" for "be raised." Note especially the places where it comes into antithesis with "asleep" (*e.g.* verses 15, 20). You will perhaps not wish to change the familiar old rendering, but you will find it imbued with new significance. The noun of this stem is used but once in the New Testament (Matt. xxvii. 53).

2. Nearly as frequent as *egeiro*, and on the whole more conspicuous, are the verb *anistemi* and its noun *anastasis*. The noun is translated "resurrection." The verb denotes to rise up or raise one up from the supineness of death to the vigour of life. Peter turned to the body of Tabitha and said, "Rise up." She opened her eyes, saw Peter, sat up, "and he gave her his hand, and raised her up." Jesus commanded the ruler's daughter to awaken, "and straightway the damsel rose up" (Acts ix. 40, 41; Mark v. 41, 42).

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh.

3. The words of these two stems are sometimes used interchangeably, and in variant readings one is often displaced by the other. Resurrection *of* the dead is frequently mentioned, but resurrection *from* the dead still more frequently. In the first of these expressions dead persons are represented as rising to life, in the second, one is represented as passing out of the class of dead persons into another class. Perhaps we have here nothing more than two differing aspects of the same fact.

4. Whatever exceptional or unusual forms of expression there may be in the recorded teachings of Jesus and His immediate followers, the ordinary presentation is not that of buried bodies rising up from their graves, or from Hades, but that of a person awakening from unconsciousness, rising up from the powerlessness of death to the activity of life.

Twilight and sunrise,
  Burden and heat of day,
Sunset and twilight—
  So passeth life away.
Back in my Mother's arms
  Lay this tired clod,
Till a fresh sunrise
  Wake me—with God.

II.

The Resurrection of Jesus.

1. The Resurrection of Jesus is, above all else, a display of power. He who is our strength moves out of the bonds wherewith the grave had bound Him; He shatters the gates of brass, and bursts the bars of iron in sunder. God, by raising Jesus Christ from the dead, has overcome death, and opened the door of everlasting life—opened the door. There is an uprush of pent energy; there is an eruption of might. And barriers yield and break, and doors are flung open, and a passage has been forced, and human life is carried forward as by an irresistible flood past its ancient limits. It moves out into new fields, on untravelled levels; through the doors that had so long forbidden its entry it presses onwards, driven by the power of its indwelling might.

2. That is the Resurrection as St. Paul conceives it. A tremendous action must have taken place, and all the world is convulsed with the tumult and the shock. God has come upon the scene in the greatness of His name, "according to the working of the mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him on his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion; and he hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things." The words tumble over one another in their anxiety to portray this immense and overwhelming effort to which the Eternal has committed Himself.

3. This insistence on the energy put in action concentrates itself for St. Paul on the reality of the risen body of the Lord. There are critics who succeed in persuading themselves that St. Paul by his teaching of the spiritual resurrection of our own bodies in the famous chapter of the Corinthians, consciously avoids any reference to the Lord's actual body which is obviously at variance with the usual belief. And yet he is most certainly and emphatically rehearsing as his own the universal tradition of the Church. He is deliberately appealing at the very time to the fact that he is but saying for himself, what he received as the authorized account which every Christian held, by sheer necessity through being a Christian.

4. And so, again, the vividness of the Apostle's recognition of the humanity of the risen Christ alone explains the intensity and the immediacy of the activities which it sets in motion here on earth. The entire sum, he tells us, of our bodily conditions here in the flesh, experiences at once the result of our life hidden with Christ in God. For that which is hid there with God is one with our human realities here; it tells upon them inevitably. It is in our bodies that we become so forcibly aware of the change that has been at work. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, evil desires, and passions; put also away all anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking; lie not one to another." Why? Why is all this bound to happen? Because you are putting on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, and this through identification with that body of Christ

alive from the dead, in which there can be neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. So we are alive by the Spirit working with His splendid energy in our flesh; the Spirit that is groaning and travailing, struggling and striving, helping our infirmity with His irresistible force, working for the adoption —*i.e.* the redemption—of our body!

III.

The Resurrection of our Body.

1. Jesus rose in the body. His was no mere immortality of the soul; He claimed the body as part of *Himself*. In the body He ascended; in the body, now glorified, He lives and rules; in the body He will appear again, the second time, unto salvation. Not only, however, has He Himself risen in the body, but His resurrection is set forth as the pledge of ours. The hope of the believer is not simply that his *soul* shall live hereafter, but he looks for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. The body of his humiliation shall yet be changed into the image of Christ's glorious body.

¶ It may be difficult for us to reconcile St. Paul's description of the spiritual body, but it is plain that he himself did not recognize any difficulty. He universally takes the actual body of the Lord as the very ground of his Resurrection doctrine. It is out of its reality and identity that he draws all his moral and practical teaching. He can never speak or think of the Resurrection without showing that he has the actual body before his eyes. So, in the text the Resurrection of Jesus is the proof and the pledge that what happened to the Lord will happen to us. And what is that? The raising of the body. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead dwell in us, then He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead is bound to quicken, too, our mortal bodies.[1]

2. In the bodily resurrection of our Lord—an organic part of the reconciling work of Christ—we have the earnest of the bodily as well as the spiritual redemption of all that are in Him. For it must not be forgotten that the work of Christ is a work of reconciliation in more than one sense. Of course, primarily, it is the reconciliation between the individual sinner and the holy God

[1] H. Scott-Holland.

against whom he has offended; then it is also the potential harmonization of the schism which sin has wrought in man's nature, so that man comes into unison with himself; and to crown all, the cross is also the potential reconciliation of the entire cosmos, including, of course, man's physical being, which has been disordered by sin. It is the plan of God to sum up all things in Christ, and through His cross.

¶ Souls may fly off, perhaps, as the hymns tell us, to distant worlds, to unknown spheres. We may think anything we like about such winged creatures; they have nothing to do with us. But the spirits of those we have loved and cared for, the spirits who have held converse with ours, cannot be changed into birds or butterflies. They must be still human, the more they have entered into converse with the Divine. And why must we force ourselves into the conception of them as without bodies? Is it because they have dropped that which was corrupt and dead, because this has been given "earth to earth, dust to dust"? Was it this dead thing which we saw and heard and handled? Was it this from which sweet words came forth? That which is mortal is gone; is any life gone? Is not mortality opposed to life?[1]

i. The Body.

1. It is a correct instinct which leads men to speak of the salvation of "the soul." The same instinct asserts itself when we speak of the immortality of the soul, but of the resurrection of the body. What is the human body? Differentially, it is the complement of organs through which an individual human spirit works. Whether it is necessarily made of matter is another question. In certain conditions, we would speak of the body of a shadow or of a reflection. The Bible says little of disembodied spirits as such. It represents the human person in the life after death as a soul, a self, a spirit with whatever organism is requisite for maintaining personal identity. It never speaks of the resurrection of "the flesh" or of the materials of which our present bodies are composed, but it emphasizes the resurrection of the body. "If the Spirit of him that awakened Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that awakened Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11).

[1] F. D. Maurice, *Life*, ii. 623.

2. The body is as really a part of man's personality as the soul is. It is not, as philosophy is apt to teach us, a mere vesture or accident, or, still worse, temporary prison-house, of the soul; it is part of *ourselves*. Not, indeed, in the sense that the soul cannot survive the body, or subsist in some fashion without it, but in the sense that man was not created *incorporeal spirit*. His soul was made and meant to inhabit the body, and was never intended to subsist apart from it. Hence death, in the true Biblical point of view, is not something natural to man, but can only be regarded as something violent, *un*natural, the rupture or separation of parts of man's being that were never meant to be disjoined. The soul, in virtue of its spiritual, personal nature, survives the body; but, in separation from the body, it is, as many things in Scripture (*e.g.* its doctrine of Sheol) show, in a mutilated, imperfect, weakened condition. This view is not only important in itself as giving its due share of honour to the body, and harmonizing with the close relations between soul and body on which modern psychology lays increasing stress; but it will be found to shed much light on other doctrines of Scripture—for instance, on death, on immortality, on resurrection, on the full scope of Christ's redemption.

¶ A human body is the necessary—is the only—method and condition on earth of spiritual personality. It is capable, indeed, of expressing spirit very badly; it is capable of belying it; indeed, it is hardly capable of expressing it quite perfectly; it is, in fact, almost always falling short of at least the ideal expression of it. And yet body is *the only* method of spiritual life; even as things are, spirit is the true meaning of bodily life; and bodies are really vehicles and expressions of spirit; whilst the perfect ideal would certainly be, not spirit without body, but body which was the ideally perfect utterance of spirit.[1]

¶ It was with keen feeling that St. Paul, with his thorn in the flesh and his many infirmities, referred to the body of humiliation, and it was with gladness that he looked forward to the body of glory, which would accomplish whatsoever his soul desired, so that he could imagine no high endeavour but this perfect servant would carry it into action.[2]

ii. The Resurrection Body.

1. Our resurrection bodies are to be our mortal bodies made alive. That this making alive implies transformation is much

[1] Moberly, *Problems and Principles*, 358. [2] J. Watson.

insisted upon. We wait for the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory" (Phil. iii. 21).

¶ Matthew Arnold has told us that St. Paul, without being aware of it, substituted an ethical for a physical resurrection, and an eternal life in the spirit here for an everlasting life hereafter. Now a German theologian (Kabisch) tells us that St. Paul knows nothing of a figurative "life" ethical in quality, but only of a physical life; that prolongation of physical life after death is the object of his hope; that even the Spirit, in his system of thought, is physical and finely material, and communicates itself by physical means, by baptism, and even by generation through a Christian parent; that the germ of the resurrection body is a spiritual, yet physical body, existing now within the dead carcase of the old body of sin; and that the essence of the resurrection will consist in the manifestation of this spiritual body by the sloughing off of its gross carnal envelope. Such are the two extremes. Surely the truth lies somewhere between.[1]

I dreamed that I was growing old
  (It may be it was not a dream),
I shivered in the frosty cold
  And trembled in the summer beam;
It cost me many a bitter sigh,
Until I knew it was not I.

The house my Maker for me made
  Received His likeness in its form;
His wisdom all its parts displayed,
  His beauty clothed its chambers warm;
If not so fair as years go by,
What matter—for it is not I.

The lamps that light its rooms burn low,
  Its music sounds more dull of late,
And one—it may be friend or foe,
  Knocks loudly often at its gate;
I tremble then—I scarce know why,
My house he claims, it is not I.

I am indeed a dweller there,
  A winter and a summer guest,
Its rust and its decay I share,
  But cannot look therein to rest;

[1] A. B. Bruce, *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, 391.

I'm sure to leave it by and by,
'Tis but my house—it is not I.

I sometimes think, when lying down,
For the last time I lock the door,
And leave the home so long my own,
That I may find it yet once more
So changed and fair I scarce shall know
The home I lived in long ago.[1]

2. Of what nature, then, is the resurrection body?

(1) First, it is identical with the mortal body of the same person, in the sense of its being body to the same spirit, and constituting with that spirit the same soul, the same self. Jesus, speaking on another subject, stated an implication which Paul recognized and expanded. When a grain of wheat dies in the earth, it has a resurrection in the "much fruit" which springs from it (John xii. 24). Paul calls attention (1 Cor. xv. 36–41) to the identity of the blade with the kernel that was sown: "to each seed a body of its own." The kernel and the blade are alike the body to the differential principle of the kernel. The product is still wheat, not something else; still that individual type of wheat, not some other.

(2) Second, various terms are used to indicate the differences between the present body of a person and his resurrection body. One is earthy and the other heavenly, one psychical and the other spiritual, one corruptible and the other incorruptible (1 Cor. xv. 42–54). Jesus had taught that in the resurrection men die no more, but are like the angels (Luke xx. 36 and parallels), and Paul expands this doctrine of a heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible body. This might be illustrated by all the numerous passages which speak of the changing of our mortal bodies (*e.g.* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; 2 Cor. v. 2, 4; Phil. iii. 21; Rom. viii. 11).

¶ Should it be the case that the soul had become so perfectly embodied that its covering is now its character, then the moment of death would be the moment of judgment, for the soul would carry with it, as it were, its whole history, and show the deeds done in the body. We have, indeed, I think, a hint and prophecy of this correspondence between body and soul when before our eyes a face of perfect shape grows unsightly through pride and

[1] J. E. A. Brown.

lust, and a countenance that once was repulsive becomes attractive through the beauty of the soul. If the soul in her sin or in her loveliness can so far mould to her will this stubborn matter, what may she not do with a finer material? And so we may be writing our own books of judgment, recording every high endeavour and every base passion upon the sensitive and eternal body of the soul.[1]

(3) Third, emphasis is particularly placed on the idea that the resurrection body is not subject to the perpetual flux which we think of as characterizing matter. That it is incorruptible is many times reiterated. Christian teaching, except in figure of speech, does not mention the nourishing of the resurrection bodies of the redeemed by eating and drinking. Jesus expressly says that there is no marrying in the resurrection. Note the contrast with the teachings of Muhammad and others. And as if other expressions were not explicit enough, Paul expressly tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv. 50), that is, that the resurrection body is not a body of flesh and blood.

¶ Science suggests that as the seen universe is composed of matter, the unseen is composed of ether, and at every point of investigation we "are led from the visible and tangible to the invisible and intangible"; and science also concludes that the visible universe will in the end be swallowed up by the invisible, and this world disappear as a "species of matter out of date." The body of the future cannot therefore be material, but is likely to be ethereal, a body to which matter could offer no obstacle, and whose mobility would be incalculable. It is evident that a body of this substance would be much more akin to the soul, a more flexible instrument and a more transparent veil, so that while the body of matter hides the inner self, the body of ether would be its revelation.[1]

¶ As life wears on, and the physical freshness and beauty of the body fade, a new expression often comes out which reveals the body of the soul. In disease I have often seen faces transfigured, as though the husk of earthy matter became for a moment transparent, and an inner body, wearing the soul's likeness, shone through. Death often completes this purging away of the mere fleshly carcase, and gives a truer picture than the living face of the body of the spiritual world. I have seen

[1] J. Watson.

faces of noble Christian combatants, which wore but a common expression in this life, look grand and heroic in death.

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
To those that watch it more and more,
A likeness, hardly seen before,
Comes out—to some one of his race:

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
I see thee what thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see,
And what I see I leave unsaid,
Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
His darkness beautiful with thee.

Yes, and death to those who have lived Christianly is a kind of transfiguration. "He who raised up Christ from the dead, doth quicken the mortal body"—and in death we see how perfectly—"by his spirit who dwelleth within."[1]

3. The subject of the resurrection of the body is not devoid of practical interest. It really lies at the bottom of the ideal of a Christian State. Throughout the Epistles of the New Testament the duties of the Christian life are based upon the fact of our Lord's Resurrection. Before that event polygamy, concubinage, private divorce, and even slavery, had the sanction of religion. But the Christian was required to "put off" all these practices; and the "newness of life" which distinguished him from the rest of mankind was conceived as resulting directly from the fact that "Christ was raised from the dead."

¶ Other religions may teach that there is a magical charm in asceticism; but none of them condemns as sinful the free indulgence of any natural appetite, provided it be not coupled with imprudence, or with disregard of the acknowledged rights of others. And St. Paul was apparently of the same opinion—if so be that Christ is not risen. In a world where the guiding principle is common sense, he could conceive of only one alternative to life in union with a risen Lord: "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."[2]

¶ And, therefore, let no difficult speculations, no haunting

[1] J. Baldwin Brown. [2] E. H. Archer-Shepherd.

doubts, no attempts to be wise above that which is written, move you from this solid certainty, that, when your time comes to die, and that tired body which, perhaps, now contains in it the seed of the disease which shall one day lay it low, lies still in death, then the Holy Spirit who has disciplined you and taught you and confirmed you and led you all your life long unto that day, has yet one more loving office to discharge for that body which has been His temple for so long—He will raise it from the dead. It was an old prophecy which expressed well the undying instinct of immortality: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption"; and if that was proved true in the case of Christ, it will also be proved true in the case of a Christian.[1]

Never weather-beaten sail more willing bent to shore,
Never tired pilgrim's limbs affected slumber more,
Than my wearied sprite now longs to fly out of my troubled breast.
O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soul to rest!

Ever blooming are the joys of heaven's high Paradise,
Cold age deafs not there our ears nor vapour dims our eyes:
Glory there the sun outshines; whose beams the Blessed only see.
O come quickly, glorious Lord, and raise my sprite to Thee![2]

¶ And if the dying are to lift up their heads, then lift up your heads, ye mourners. What has happened to your dead? you ask this morning; they were here with you last Easter, you say, joining in the Easter hymns and looking with you at the Easter flowers. What has happened to them? A beautiful thing: "The loving Spirit has led them forth into the land of righteousness." It was just what they had prayed for in the Psalms time after time: "May thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness"; and He took them at their word, and escorted them forth to be with Christ for ever—

Children, in My gracious keeping
Leave ye now your dear ones sleeping.

I'd a dream to-night
As I fell asleep,
Oh! the touching sight
Makes me still to weep:

[1] A. F. Winnington Ingram. [2] Thomas Campion.

Of my little lad,
Gone to leave me sad,
Aye, the child I had,
But was not to keep.

As in heaven high,
I my child did seek,
There, in train, came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily-white,
With a lamp alight;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
Oh! it did not burn;
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turn'd about,
"Your tears put it out:
Mother, never mourn."[1]

[1] W. Barnes.

The Leading of the Spirit.

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THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.—Rom. viii. 14.

1. THESE words constitute the classical passage in the New Testament on the great subject of the "leading of the Holy Spirit." They stand, indeed, almost without strict parallel in the New Testament. We read, no doubt, in that great discourse of our Lord's which John has preserved for us, in which, as He was about to leave His disciples, He comforts their hearts with the promise of the Spirit, that "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." But this "guidance into truth" by the Holy Spirit is something very different from the "leading of the Spirit" spoken of in our present text; and it is appropriately expressed by a different term. We read also in Luke's account of our Lord's temptation that He was "led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil," where our own term is used. But though undoubtedly this passage throws light upon the mode of the Spirit's operation described in our text, it can scarcely be looked upon as a parallel passage to it. The only other passage, indeed, which speaks distinctly of the "leading of the Spirit" in the sense of our text is Gal. v. 18, where in a context very closely similar Paul again employs the phrase: "But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." It is from these two passages primarily that we must obtain our conception of what the Scriptures mean by "the leading of the Holy Spirit."

2. There is certainly abundant reason why we should seek to learn what the Scriptures mean by "spiritual leading." There are few subjects so intimately related to the Christian life of which Christians appear to have formed, in general, conceptions so inadequate, where they are not even positively erroneous. The

sober-minded seem often to look upon it as a mystery into which it would be well not to inquire too closely. The consequence is that the very phrase, "the leading of the Spirit," has come to bear, to many, a flavour of fanaticism.

I.

The Leading of the Spirit belongs to, and characterizes, the Sons of God.

1. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God," says the Apostle, "these are sons of God." We have here in effect a definition of the sons of God. The primary purpose of the sentence is not, indeed, to give this definition. But the statement is so framed as to equate its two members, and even to throw a stress upon the coextensiveness of the two designations. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these, and these only, are sons of God." Thus the leading of the Spirit is presented as the very characteristic of the children of God. This is what differentiates them from all others. All who are led by the Spirit of God are thereby constituted the sons of God; and none can claim the high title of sons of God who are not led by the Spirit of God.

¶ When we consider this Divine work within our souls with reference to the end of the whole process we call it sanctification; when we consider it with reference to the process itself, as we struggle on day by day in the somewhat devious and always thorny pathway of life, we call it spiritual leading. Thus the "leading of the Holy Spirit" is revealed to us as simply a synonym for sanctification when looked at from the point of view of the pathway itself, through which we are led by the Spirit as we more and more advance towards that conformity to the image of His Son which God has placed before us as our great goal.[1]

2. This leading of the Spirit is not some peculiar gift reserved for special sanctity and granted as the reward of high merit alone. It is the common gift poured out on all God's children to meet their common need, and it is the evidence, therefore, of their common weakness and their common unworthiness. It is not the reward of special spiritual attainment; it is the condition of all spiritual attainment. In its absence we should remain hopelessly

[1] B. B. Warfield.

the children of the devil; by its presence alone are we constituted the children of God. It is only because of the Spirit of God shed abroad in our hearts that we are able to cry, Abba, Father.

¶ Defining as they do, generally and without exception, all the sons of God, the words cannot point to any exceptional or what we commonly know as miraculous agency. The influence exerted must be normal and ordinary. That is, at least, if the sons of God are, as we know they are, to be moving about in the world, performing the ordinary duties of life like other men. The influence of the Divine Spirit must not be expected and will not show itself in lifting them out of common life, but in leading them in it, however this latter term is to be understood. And such a consideration will necessarily imply much more. Common life proceeds on common rules. God has just as much bound together seed-time and harvest, means and result, in the life of men as in the life of nature. And it is in, not out of, this chain of connected action, that we may look for the leading of God's Spirit in man, just as it is in this same chain that we expect His working in nature.[1]

¶ How can a privilege which is open to all lead any man to think that he is better than his neighbour? Men do not give themselves airs because the sun shines on their heads, and the scent of the sea and the forest mixes itself with the blood, and flowers blow about their pathway, and the blue quivers with lark-songs. They never grow arrogant through that which they possess in common with their fellows, even should many in the crowd be unmusical and inartistic and indifferent to the exhilarations of nature. And those who realize that this privilege rests upon grace, and is enjoyed through faith alone, cannot possibly be under any special temptation to become proud.[2]

Do not proudly elevate your head through the charms of your voice,
For reeds and silken cords are also endowed with speech.
Attach not so much dignity and excellence to your sight,
For the sparrow can discern at a distance of twenty parasangs.
Boast not so loudly of your powers of hearing,
For the hare is sensible of sound at ten leagues' distance.
Oh, weak man! speak not so much of your perception of smell,
For a mouse can smell at a bow-shot distance.[3]

[1] H. Alford. [2] T. G. Selby.
[3] Mirkhond, in Field's *Little Book of Eastern Wisdom*, 25.

3. As the sons of God are characterized by the leading of the Spirit, so at the same time the leading of the Spirit produces certain broad results in them, so that in the sons of God we discern (1) life in God, (2) union with God, (3) likeness to God.

(1) *Life in God.* To be a son is to be a partaker of the immortal life of God. Paul speaks of the immortal God. To be a son is to participate in His eternal life. The Spirit that leads is in him whom He leads "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Sonship holds in it a growing conviction, a consciousness of life eternal. In the course of years it becomes a main factor of thought, faith, and feeling; indeed, it becomes a fixed, unfluctuating part of consciousness. It never suggests a doubt, a question, but settles down immovably among the certainties: an intuition of God's indwelling Spirit. Thus it comes to pass, as Channing finely argues, that our strongest proofs of immortality are not the analogies of nature, not the reasonings and deductions of intellect, but the possession of Divine purity, truth, and love. These give vitality to hope, and to faith the full force of a realization. He who has hold of, and grows up into, these, is not left to the doubtful determinings of the logical understanding; he has a surer token, he has got the *eternal life itself.* He *knows.* He has Christ in him, the hope of glory. He is an heir of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ. To be led by the Spirit, is to enter and grow in the life of God, and so become a being after God's own kind. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God.

(2) *Union with God.* "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." That reveals the secret of true communion and intercourse with God. That shows the root of it. It is more than an emotion or a feeling, more than a happy mood; it is a life principle, deep, pure, strong and eternal; and happy feelings, pleasures of emotion, are but one form in which it may declare itself. It is really a community of life which identifies the human soul with God in His mind, will, and character.

(3) *Likeness to God.* This is the final result of the leading

of the Spirit of God. The man is broken off from fleshly and devilish affinities, and enters into moral affinity with God. He and God are like-minded. The similitude is not of form, but of character. The likeness is inward, spiritual. It is a disposition revealing itself in tastes and tempers and deeds. We sometimes say of a lad, "He is his father's son; he is his father over again." We mean, generally, more than appearance. We point to a likeness more essential. We mean he is of his father's spirit—has his habits and tendencies. In this moral or intellectual sense a lad very often is not his father's son; he is sometimes his mother's. In association with this fact we at once call to mind other words of the Lord Jesus; they are these—"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

¶ There is a law of unconscious assimilation. We become like those with whom we go. Without being conscious of it, we take on the characteristics of those with whom we live. I remember one time my brother returned home for a visit after a prolonged absence. As we were walking down the street together he said to me, "You have been going with Denning a good deal" —a mutual friend of ours. Surprised, I said, "How do you know I have?" He said, "You walk just like him." What my brother had said was strictly true, though he did not know it. Our friend had a very decided way of walking. As a matter of fact, we had been walking home from the Young Men's Christian Association three or four nights every week. And unconsciously I had grown to imitate his way of walking.[1]

II.

The Leading of the Spirit is Controlling and Continuous.

i. It is controlling.

1. One is not led, in the sense of our text, when he is merely directed in the way he should go, guided, as we may say, by one who points out the path and leads only by going before in it; or

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 20.

when he is merely upheld while he himself finds or directs himself to the goal. The Greek language possesses words which precisely express these ideas, but the Apostle passes over these and selects a term which expresses determining control over our actions.

¶ Our Lord promised His disciples that when the Spirit of Truth should come, He should guide them into all the truth. Here a term is employed which does not express controlling leading, but what we may perhaps call suggestive leading. It is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament of God's guidance of His people, and once, at least, of the Holy Spirit: "Teach us to do thy will, for thou art my God; let thy good Spirit guide us in the land of uprightness." But the term which Paul employs in our text is a much stronger one than this. It is not the proper word to use of a guide who goes before and shows the way, or even of a commanding general who leads an army. It has stamped upon it rather the conception of the exertion of a power of control over the actions of its subject, which the strength of the led one is insufficient to withstand. This is the proper word to use, for example, when speaking of leading animals, as when our Lord sent His disciples to find the ass and her colt and commanded them "to loose them and lead them to him" (Matt. xxi. 2); or as when Isaiah declares in the Scripture which was being read by the Eunuch of Ethiopia whom Philip was sent to meet in the desert, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter." It is applied to the conveying of sick folk—as men who are not in a condition to control their own movements; as, for example, when the good Samaritan set the wounded traveller on his own beast and led him to an inn and took care of him (Luke x. 34); or when Christ commanded the blind man of Jericho "to be led unto him" (Luke xviii. 40). It is most commonly used of the enforced movements of prisoners; as when we are told that they led Jesus to Caiaphas to the palace (John xviii. 28); or when we are told that they seized Stephen and led him into the council (Acts vi. 12); or that Paul was provided with letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, "that if he found any that were of the Way, he might lead them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts ix. 2). In a word, though the term may, of course, sometimes be used when the idea of force retires somewhat into the background, and is commonly so used when it is transferred from external compulsion to internal influence—as, for example, when we are told that Barnabas took Paul and led him to the apostles (Acts ix. 27), and that Andrew led Simon unto Jesus (John i. 42)—yet the proper meaning of the word includes the idea of control, and the im-

plication of prevailing determination of action never wholly leaves it.[1]

¶ Every spark of light in the soul is kindled by the Holy Spirit. Every movement of the divine life in a man is His. Every heavenward desire, every yearning of the love of Christ, every keen spiritual judgment cutting through the fallacies and self-seeking evasions of the world, is from Him and by Him. I cannot stir a step in my spiritual life without Him. I cannot turn my eye of faith to Christ an instant without Him. Every sweet consolation poured out on my soul is His. Every testimony to a man's place in God's family is from His gentle voice, whispering in the waste places of his heart, bearing witness with his spirit that he is one of the sons of God. Every flower that blooms in man He has tended and cherished: every fruit of holiness, He set it, and watched it, and guarded it from blight and frost, and gave it its consistence and its bloom: the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear, in nature and in grace, alike are His: His, according to His own laws and procedure, but no less His throughout, and His entirely.[2]

2. It is to be observed, however, on the other hand, that although Paul uses a term here which emphasizes the controlling influence of the Spirit of God over the activities of God's children, he does not represent the action of the Spirit as a substitute for their activities. If one is not led, in the sense of our text, when one is merely guided, it is equally true that one is not led when one is carried. The animal that is led by the attendant, the blind man that is led to Christ, the prisoner that is led to jail—each is indeed under the control of his leader, who alone determines the goal and the pathway; but each also proceeds on that pathway and to that goal by virtue of his own powers of locomotion. There was a word lying at the Apostle's hand by which he could have expressed the idea that God's children are borne by the Spirit's power to their appointed goal of holiness, apart from any activities of their own, had he elected to do so. It is employed by Peter when he would inform us how God gave His message of old to His prophets. "For no prophecy," he tells us, "ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being *borne* by the Holy Ghost."

¶ There is a difference between the Spirit's action in dealing

[1] B. B. Warfield. [2] H. Alford.

with the prophet of God in imparting through him God's message to men and the action of the same Spirit in dealing with the children of God in bringing them into their proper holiness of life. The prophet is "borne" of the Spirit; the child of God is "led." The prophet's attitude in receiving a revelation from God is passive, purely receptive; he has no part in it, adds nothing to it, is only the organ through which the Spirit delivers it to men; he is taken up by the Spirit, as it were, and borne along by Him by virtue of the power that resides in the Spirit, which is natural to Him, and which, in its exercise, supersedes the natural activities of the man. Such is the import of the term used by Peter to express it. On the other hand, the son of God is not purely passive in the hands of the sanctifying Spirit; he is not borne, but led—that is, his own efforts enter into the progress made under the controlling direction of the Spirit; he supplies, in fact, the force exerted in attaining the progress, while yet the controlling Spirit supplies the entire directing impulse.[1]

¶ "Led." That word is the key to God's method of grace. The Spirit comes and gives *facility* in action. He does not supersede or compel it. He comes to the human soul to sustain it in right conditions and habits. He dwells there — as a generator of forces, not as a tyrant to overbear it in the way of power.[2]

¶ That God leads us, and does not drive, is the answer to many of the questions that have been put to me. Why are there sin and evil in the world? What was the necessity for the Incarnation? Why the astounding miracle of the Atonement? What is the good of the Church? The answer to every one of these questions is that God leads and does not drive. I remember so well in the old East End days, when the young men of the boating club connected with the Oxford House came to ask about their rowing on Sunday morning, and I explained to them that I could not remain their president if their club races were held on Sunday morning; that it was impossible for me to commit myself to the principle that Sunday morning was the time for a boat-race, but that I had no right, as president or head of Oxford House, to dictate to them as individuals what they should do, for I lived down there to try and lead them to better ways of spending Sunday morning; and the deputation, with that perfect frankness and trust which they always gave me, looked up and said: "We quite understand, Mr. Ingram: you have come down here to lead us, and not to drive us."[3]

[1] B. B. Warfield. [2] W. Hubbard. [3] Bishop A. F. W. Ingram.

ii. It is continuous.

1. The spiritual leading of which Paul speaks is not something sporadic, given only on occasion of some special need of supernatural direction, but something continuous, affecting all the operations of a Christian man's activities throughout every moment of his life. It has but one end in view, the saving from sin, the leading into holiness; but it affects every single activity of every kind—physical, intellectual, and spiritual—bending it towards that end. Since it is nothing other than the power of God unto salvation, it must needs abide with the sinner, work constantly upon him, enter into all his acts, condition all his doings, and lead him thus steadily onward towards the one great goal.

He leads us on
By paths we did not know,
Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow;
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day,
Yet, when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on.

He leads us on
Through all the unquiet years;
Past all our dreamland hopes, and doubts, and fears
He guides our steps. Through all the tangled maze
Of losses, sorrows, and o'erclouded days
We know His will is done;
And still He leads us on.

And He, at last,
After the weary strife,
After the restless fever we call life,
After the dreariness, the aching pain,
The wayward struggles, which have proved in vain,
After our toils are past—
Will give us rest at last.[1]

2. It is impossible, in tracing the Spirit's work, to keep separate the various conventionally named parts of a man's inward being in which that work is carried on. Man is *one* in

[1] Jane Borthwick.

himself, though manifold in powers and in phases of that one being. Great fault and great confusion have been occasioned in these things, by regarding men's spirits as if they were compounded of various detached portions, and regions fenced off from one another. We speak of the judgment, the memory, the affections, the imagination, as if they were distinct members of the soul, as the hand and foot and head are of the body. We are in some measure obliged so to speak, from the very imperfection of our thought and language. But we must never forget, that it is one and the same spirit—one and the same man, that judges and remembers and loves and fears and imagines.

(1) The first step of the Spirit's ordinary work of guidance takes place in that part of man's spiritual being which we know as his *understanding*. It is a guidance of information. It is expressed by our Lord in these words: "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." It is revelation of facts regarding Christ and His work. Let us trace it and observe its laws. It is carried on in appointed association with ordinary means and sources of knowledge. The Spirit of God does not reveal Christ and the things of Christ to a heathen who never has heard of Christ. "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" is the Apostle's question, even in his own day of miraculous agency. God is pleased then that this part of His work should be subserved and conditioned by the making known to men of the facts of the Gospel. On this His appointment, the duty of preaching, the duty of dispersing the Scriptures, the duty of teaching and informing the young, are founded.

¶ Whenever the Spirit is followed, the soul *sees*. The mark aimed at has been espied. All is not taken fully in at the first, nor ever, but there is *sight* and a *seeing*. Could you stand on the highest peak of the highest mountain, you could not see *all* the world; on the other hand, looking out of your cottage window, you see enough to call you forth to research and labour. It is not a blind going. The way of your steps is discovered. True, the Spirit will often have to lead you "as one who is blind," taking you gently by the hand, holding you up, and guarding you; but you follow because you have learned to know and hearken to His voice, and because you have found safety, strength, and wisdom in heeding Him, and are sure of the end.[1]

[1] W. Hubbard.

Step softly, under snow or rain,
To find the place where men can pray;
The way is all so very plain,
That we may lose the way.

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore
On tortured puzzles from our youth.
We know all labyrinthine lore,
We are the three Wise Men of yore,
And we know all things but the truth.

Go humbly . . . it has hailed and snowed . . .
With voices low and lanterns lit,
So very simple is the road,
That we may stray from it.

The world grows terrible and white,
And blinding white the breaking day,
We walk bewildered in the light,
For something is too large for sight,
And something much too plain to say.

The Child that was ere worlds begun
(. . . We need but walk a little way . . .
We need but see a latch undone . . .),
The Child that played with moon and sun
Is playing with a little hay.

The house from which the heavens are fed,
The old strange house that is our own,
Where tricks of words are never said,
And Mercy is as plain as bread,
And Honour is as hard as stone.

Go humbly; humble are the skies,
And low and large and fierce the Star,
So very near the Manger lies,
That we may travel far.

Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes
To roar to the resounding plain,
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,
For God Himself is born again;
And we are little children walking
Through the snow and rain.[1]

[1] G. K. Chesterton.

(2) From the understanding the guidance of the Spirit goes to the *will*. The same Spirit which revealed to the eye of the mind the facts of Christ's work in their vital significance now turns that eye inward on its own region of life and responsibility. In our Lord's description of the Spirit's convicting work in the world, namely, the convincing of sin, the action on the conscience is placed first (knowledge of the facts of redemption being presupposed), because the very bringing home of these facts to the inner being is necessarily the conviction of sin.

¶ It is by our *will* that we are to be proved and judged. In the midst of all this growing, overwhelming light, the will may remain stubborn and rebellious. Faults in childhood growing into the sins of boyhood, hardening into the entanglements and obstinacy of manhood, establish a deliberate resistance in the will against the light of the Spirit. We often see the most promising forms of character slowly fading off. For a time there is a kind of negative declension. No marked and active faults appear; but nothing is advancing towards holiness and the mind of Christ. They seem for awhile to stand still, as we see in an arrow's flight a momentary pause before it begins to descend. So they never go beyond a certain point; then for awhile they hang in suspense—then slowly fall. Then some one sin appears, long nourished in secret, now at last revealed; some one parasite, which has clung about them, and slowly confirmed its grasp around the whole strength and stature of their character. And this one sin gives the fatal wound to their spiritual life.[1]

¶ Seventeen beautiful Easter lilies were planted in a garden, and in due time sixteen of them sprung up with all their beauty; but the one which had been planted near the hedgerow never seemed to make any progress whatever; it was carefully tended, watched, and watered day by day, and yet it never grew. At last the gardener dug it up, and then he found out the cause. In the hedge had been planted a clematis, and it had thrust its silken roots through the earth, wanting something to take hold of, and, feeling the lily bulb, had twined around it, until by degrees it had strangled it; and the lily which grew above the earth was never more than a poor, puny thing.[2]

(3) Lastly, comes the quickening of the *affections*. All men are ruled by either love or fear: there is no intermediate state. "Perfect love casteth out fear," and a ruling fear casteth out love. They may be mingled for awhile; but one or the other must bear

[1] H. E. Manning. [2] A. C. Price.

rule and sway at last. And this is a sure criterion. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." He would have from us the service of sons, loving, glad, and grateful, without stint or measure; not saying, How much *must* I do? but How much *may* I, how much *can* I do? How much time, substance, service, or thought can I give to Him?

Love is the key of life and death,
Of hidden heavenly mystery:
Of all Christ is, of all He saith,
Love is the key.

As three times to His Saint He saith,
He saith to me, He saith to thee,
Breathing His Grace-conferring Breath:
"Lovest thou Me?"

Ah, Lord, I have such feeble faith,
Such feeble hope to comfort me:
But love it is, is strong as death,
And I love Thee.[1]

III.

The Leading of the Spirit is Deliverance from Sin, but not Escape from Sorrow.

1. The end in view in the spiritual leading of which Paul speaks is not to enable us to escape the difficulties, dangers, trials, or sufferings of this life, but specifically to enable us to conquer sin. Let us not forget, indeed, the reality of providential guidance, or imagine that God's greatness makes Him careless of the least concerns of His children. But let us much more not forget that the great evil under which we are suffering is sin, and that the great promise which has been given us is that we shall not be left to wander, self-directed, in the paths of sin into which our feet have strayed, but that the Spirit of holiness shall dwell within us, breaking our bondage and leading us into that other pathway of good works, which God has afore prepared that we should walk in them.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

¶ Our proper road may run up rugged steeps, and down sharp and dangerous descents. Our education may of necessity demand burdens, toil, and sorrow. Our vocation may be as that of a soldier. Be it so, enough that He leads. In following Him, strife there will be; but in the striving we shall have joy, for He will be with us. His leading is not hardship, though hardship may meet us in the following. But hardships thicken with the years—hardships which we cannot cope with, if we follow not. The soldier follows with high courage the captain in whom he confides. The patriot rushes to the war for liberty and home. He will have privations and wounds. But he would be ashamed to stay behind. He could not if he would. He goes, thinking neither of work nor of pay. To save his country is for him reward and glory. So the soul that follows the Spirit may have to endure the hardship of war; but there is the enthusiasm of the conflict, and presently the joy of sacred victory. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

In pastures green? Not always; sometimes He
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me
By weary ways, where heavy shadows be.

And by still waters? No, not always so;
Oft-times the heavy tempests round me blow,
And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storm is loudest, and I cry
Aloud for help, the Master standeth by
And whispers to my soul, "Lo, it is I."

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,
"Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,
In every path of thine I lead the way."

So, whether on the hill-tops high and fair
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys where
The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.[1]

2. Yet the good man may, by virtue of his very goodness, be saved from many of the sufferings of this life and from many of the failures of this life. How many of the evils and trials of life are rooted in specific sins, we can never know. How often even failure in business may be traced directly to lack of business

[1] Henry H. Barry.

integrity rather than to pressure of circumstances or business incompetency, is mercifully hidden from us.

3. And the leading of the Spirit establishes that intimacy, confidence, and affection which are so necessary to right training. We cannot love God if He is only an instigator of providential pain and scourging in our lives. We must have the compensating kiss of a felt forgiveness upon our cheeks and the tender whisper of assurance in our souls.

¶ Mencius, the Chinese sage, who is honoured second only to Confucius himself, says: "The ancients exchanged children with each other, for the purpose of training them in letters and deportment. They were afraid lest the punishments necessary in the course of education should injure the sacred bond of affection between parent and child." No very great harm was assumed to be done if the lad looked upon the neighbour who taught him his hornbook as a natural enemy. We smile and think the danger hypothetical, and the Chinese care for the filial sentiment over-fastidious. But if no word of love ever crossed a father's lips, and parents tried to make themselves into sphinxes of imperturbable reserve, the danger might be very real indeed.[1]

¶ One of George Eliot's most skilful books deals with the fortunes of a young man who for many years had been left in entire ignorance of his parentage. When a mere infant, Daniel Deronda was placed by his Jewish mother, afterwards known as the Princess Halm-Eberstein, in the care of Sir Hugo Mallinger, with the instruction that he should be allowed to know nothing whatever of his Jewish birth and blood. At times he thought this English gentleman, who had inspired within him not a little affection, must surely be his own father. He scanned the family portraits to see if he could solve the riddle, but no reflex of these features appeared in his own. When he went to Eton, one of the boys "talked about home and parents to Daniel, and seemed to expect a like expansiveness in return." "To speak of these things was like falling flakes of fire to the imagination." One day, when Sir Hugo asked him if he would like to be a great singer, he gave up the cherished thought that this indulgent but mysterious guardian could be his father; for no English gentleman, he reasoned, would think of allowing his own boy to follow the career of a professional singer. Now this atmosphere of secrecy in which he had been brought up was cruel, and might have been attended with grave disaster to his disposition and

[1] T. G. Selby.

character, for the lad scarcely knew upon whom to bestow his pent-up affection. The delineation is not intended as a study in the growth of character, but to show probably that not a few of the sentiments of Jewish life and religion are in the blood, however little a young Jew may be told about his own ancestry and family connexions. When, after the lapse of years, Deronda had an interview with his mother, we are told that it seemed as if he were "in the presence of a mysterious Fate, rather than the longed-for mother," and he did not hesitate to say, "I have always been rebelling against the secrecy that looked like shame."[1]

I do not ask, O Lord, that life may be
A pleasant road;
I do not ask that Thou would'st take from me
Aught of its load;

I do not ask that flowers should always spring
Beneath my feet;
I know too well the poison and the sting
Of things too sweet.

For one thing only, Lord, dear Lord, I plead;
Lead me aright—
Though strength should falter, and though heart should bleed—
Through peace to light.

I do not ask, O Lord, that Thou should'st shed
Full radiance here;
Give but a ray of peace, that I may tread
Without a fear.

I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see—
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
And follow Thee.

Joy is like restless day; but peace divine
Like quiet night;
Lead me, O Lord—till perfect day shall shine,
Through peace to light.[2]

[1] T. G. Selby. [2] Adelaide Anne Procter.

IV.

A Great Consolation.

What a strong consolation for us is found in this gracious assurance—poor, weak children of men as we are! To our frightened ears the text may come at first with the solemnity of a warning: As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these, and these only, are sons of God. Is there not a declaration here that we are not God's children unless we are led by God's Spirit? Knowing ourselves, and contemplating the course of our lives and the character of our ambitions, dare we claim to be led by the Spirit of God? Is this life—this life that I am living in the flesh—is this the product of the Spirit's leading? Shall not despair close in upon me as I pass the dreadful judgment on myself that I am not led by God's Spirit, and that I am, therefore, not one of His sons? Let us hasten to remind ourselves, then, that such is not the purport nor the purpose of the text. It stands here not in order to drive us to despair because we see we have sin within us, but to kindle within us a great fire of hope and confidence because we perceive we have the Holy Spirit within us. Paul does not forget the sin within us. Who has painted it and its baleful power with more vigorous touch? But neither would he have us forget that we have the Holy Spirit within us, and what that blessed fact, above all blessed facts, means. He would not have us reason that because sin is in us we cannot be God's children, but in happy contradiction to this, that because the Holy Spirit is in us we cannot but be God's children. Sin is great and powerful; it is too great and too powerful for us; but the Holy Spirit is greater and more powerful than even sin. The discovery of sin in us might bring us to despair did not Paul discern the Holy Spirit in us—who is greater than sin—to quicken our hope.

¶ In this assurance we shall no longer beat our disheartened way through life in dumb despondency, and find expression for our passionate but hopeless longings only in the wail of the dreary poet of pessimism—

> But if from boundless spaces no answering voice shall start,
> Except the barren echo of our ever yearning heart—
> Farewell, then, empty deserts, where beat our aimless wings,
> Farewell, then, dream sublime of uncompassable things.

We are not, indeed, relieved from the necessity for healthful effort, but we can no longer speak of "vain hopes." The way may be hard, but we can no longer talk of "the unfruitful road which bruises our naked feet." Strenuous endeavour may be required of us, but we can no longer feel that we are "beating aimless wings," and can expect no further response from the infinite expanse than "a sterile echo of our own eternal longings." No, no—the language of despair falls at once from off our souls. Henceforth our accents will be borrowed rather from a nobler "poet of faith," and the blessing of Asher will seem to be spoken to us also—

> Thy shoes shall be iron and brass;
> And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.
> There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun,
> Who rideth upon the heaven for thy help,
> And in his excellency on the skies.
> The eternal God is thy dwelling-place,
> And underneath are the everlasting arms.

The Spirit of a Son.

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The Spirit of a Son.

For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.—Rom. viii. 15.

1. In a remarkable letter which appeared in the *Times*, written by Professor Harnack, in which he was dealing with the letter of the Emperor of Germany upon the controversies gathering round the Higher Criticism, great prominence was given to the fact that there is no subject of graver importance for a man than his relation to God, and that everything depends on this relation. We would all say a full "Amen" to that sentence. A true relation to God lies at the bottom of all right-shapen life. A wrong conception of God will issue in a wrong shaping of life.

2. But what is a true relation to God? It is beyond doubt a filial relationship. Our Lord has taught us that, in the first clause of the Lord's Prayer. He who prays, "Our Father which art in heaven," believes that the relation in which he stands to God is that of a child to his father; and he who thus prays—if his prayer be a reality—will find the primary shaping of his life in the fact that his relation to God in every aspect of life is that of a child to his father. Accordingly, St. Paul tells the Roman Christians that what the Holy Ghost does is to enable us with fulness of utterance to say this first clause of the Lord's Prayer. No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost. No man can really call upon God as Abba, Father, unless it be through the power of the witness of the Spirit. The Lord's Prayer can be a reality only to those who are taught to utter it in the power of the Holy Ghost. But the characteristic feature in the life of the true Christian is this, that not having the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, he is enabled to look up into the face of the Eternal as He dwells in the light that no

man can approach unto in the glory of the heavens, and with simplicity of utterance say, "Abba, Father."

3. What says the example of Christ? For let us remember this truth—the model Christian is Christ Himself; and if we want to know what the ideal Christian life is, and the conditions under which we are to live it, we have simply to discover first of all what were the conditions under which Christ, in His humanity, lived that ideal human life. The most superficial study of St. John's Gospel will teach us this, that the whole life of Christ was lived in a spirit of filial relation to His Father in heaven. When we turn to St. John's Gospel and go through it with even the most cursory study, we find one expression in it again and again, with a repetition which seems almost to be unnecessary: "My Father, My Father." We see Jesus living with His eyes always fixed upon the face of the Father which is in heaven, with a blessed consciousness of His filial relationship to the Father, not only essentially in His Divine nature, but also in His human nature. His mind is lit with the light of this relationship; His heart rejoices in its joy; His will is always fixed in its posture and action by this relation; and the life of the Christ is emphatically and pre-eminently the life of sonship.

4. And the example of St. Paul agrees. In the words of our text, taken from the supreme chapter of St. Paul's classic formulation of the meaning of Christianity, we hear the note of real and vital personal experience. From the midst of the clouds and darkness of human existence, the great spirit of St. Paul rose high in faith, and with trust and deep yearning cast itself upon the heart of the unseen Father, and not without response.

> Out of the thunder came a human voice,
> Saying, O heart I made, a heart beats here.

By the grace of God in Christ, by the power of the Father manifested in the Son, the spirit of adoption, of filiation, the spirit which can make men sons of God, went forth and transformed the spirit of St. Paul into the likeness of itself, and even in the hour of darkness and anguish he could find rest in the centre of his being by the faith which cried, "Abba, Father!"

We have—

I. The spirit of Bondage, that is, the spirit of a slave, which is a spirit of fear.

II. The spirit of Adoption, that is, the spirit of a son, a spirit which expresses itself in the glad cry, "Father."

I.

The Spirit of Bondage.

1. This is another subtle variation in the use of "spirit." From meaning the human spirit under the influence of the Divine Spirit the word comes to mean a particular state, habit, or temper of the human spirit, sometimes in itself, but more often as due to supernatural influence, good or evil. So here it is such a spirit as accompanies a state of slavery, such a servile habit as the human spirit assumes among slaves.

2. The "bondage" or "slavery," which throughout this Epistle is contrasted with the liberty of the sons of God, is the bondage of sin (vi. 6, 16, 17, 20; vii. 25), and of corruption or death as the consequence of sin (v. 21). The Apostle's readers, both Jews and Gentiles, had all been *once* under this bondage (vi. 17) which tends "unto *fear*," even the fear of death (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

3. What then (to be more particular) is this "spirit of bondage" which St. Paul says the Roman Christians had *not* received? That they had received some kind of spirit was to the Christians of that age a fact of experience, which no one doubted. The entrance into the Church was marked, as a general rule, for every believer, by an access of new spiritual emotions prompting him to unwonted utterances. So a Christian defined himself no less as a partaker of a Spirit from above than as a believer in a risen Lord. St. Paul therefore takes the receiving of a spirit for granted; the question is what kind of a spirit it was. He tells his readers emphatically that it was not one suitable to slaves, generating a habit of fear; they had not simply exchanged a heathen or a Jewish spirit of bondage for a Christian spirit of bondage; the Spirit received by the Church was—he does not

here use the formally opposite phrase, one of *freedom*, but an equivalent and more instructive term—one of *sonship*.

4. Bondage means slavery; and the spirit of bondage means the spirit which makes men look up to God as slaves do to their taskmaster. Now, a slave obeys his master from fear only; not from love or gratitude. He knows that his master is stronger than he is, and he dreads being beaten and punished by him; and therefore he obeys him only by compulsion, not of his own good-will. This is the spirit of bondage: the slavish, superstitious spirit in religion, into which all men fall, in proportion as they are mean, and sinful, and carnal, fond of indulging themselves, and bear no love to God or right things. They know that God is stronger than they; they are afraid that God will take away comforts from them, or even cast them into endless torment, if they offend Him; and, therefore, they are afraid to do wrong. They love what is wrong, and would like to do it; but they dare not, for fear of God's punishment. They do not really fear God; they only fear punishment, misfortune, death, and hell.

¶ If you wish to see how much slavery there may be in religion, you have but to glance at some of the heathen religions. They have not been all equally oppressive; where nature has been bright and free from terrors, there religion has generally had its cheerful and joyous elements. But how frightfully have some races been tormented by their religions! Having experience of arbitrary rulers and cruel enemies in the visible world, they have peopled the invisible with principalities and powers far more cruel and capricious. Their worship has been devil-worship. Imagine how the fear of their false gods must have harassed the souls of a people, before they would make their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, to propitiate them. This seems the last extremity to which the spirit of bondage could drive human beings; but, short of that, the lives of men have been filled with misery and darkness in various degrees by the malevolent powers which they have placed in their heaven.[1]

> One in a vision saw a woman fair;
> In her left hand a water jar she bare,
> And in her right a burning torch she held
> That shed around a fierce and ruddy glare.

[1] J. Ll. Davies.

Sternly she said, "With fire I will burn down
The halls of Heaven; with water I will drown
The fires of Hell,—that all men may be good
From love, not fear, nor hope of starry crown.

The fear of punishment, the lust of pay,
With Heaven and Hell shall also pass away,
And righteousness alone shall fill each heart
With the glad splendour of its shining ray."

Such is the Hindoo legend quaintly told
In Bernard Picart's famous folio old;
And 'neath this symbol ethnical, we may
A moral for the present time behold.

When fear of punishment and greed of pay
Shall faint and die in Love's serener day,
Then shall the Kingdom of the Lord arrive
And earth become the Heaven for which we pray.[1]

5. The spirit of bondage is due to world-weariness, to the torment of conscience, or to the fear of death.

(1) It is due to *weariness with this world.* Are we mere people of the world, loving money, pleasure, vanity, sin, loving to live as our own evil hearts incline us? And yet there are times when we tear ourselves away from these beloved things to say our prayers—to come to Church—to attend the Holy Communion—to read the Bible. Do we love to pray? Have we a delight in the service we attend? Do we find refreshment in the Sacrament? Is the word of God *sweet* to us? No; but, on the contrary, we are ready to exclaim, whilst engaged in any of these exercises, "What a weariness it is! when will it be over?" It is, in short, all part of our weariness with the world itself. We attend to these things partly in hope of finding pleasure in them, but chiefly out of some sense of duty or some fear of the consequence of neglect.

Dear Saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear,
Nor suffering, which shuts up eye and ear
To all that has delighted them before,
And lets us be what we were once no more.
No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain
Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
By what of old pleased us, and will again.

[1] W. E. A. Axon.

No, 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurled
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
But takes away the power—this can avail,
By drying up our joy in everything,
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.[1]

(2) It is due to *the torment of a guilty conscience.* The spirit of bondage is strikingly seen in the case of those who are just awakened to a sense and feeling of their sins. Observe a man in this condition who has not yet discovered the fulness and the freeness of the gospel offer of salvation. He sees himself a lost and ruined sinner. God's holy and spiritual commandments are written up, as it were, before his eyes, and he looks at them as Belshazzar did at the handwriting on the wall—looks and trembles. And what does this poor trembling sinner do to mend his case? He labours with all his might to make himself acceptable to God; multiplies his prayers and duties; tries to keep the whole law; resolves to mortify his flesh, to forsake every evil habit, to practise every grace which his Bible recommends. As for the salvation of Christ Jesus, he has no other idea of what it means than to hope that he may render himself worthy of it by a strict obedience to the law. And yet he finds that his duties and observances lie heavy on him. They are but vain attempts to satisfy an accusing conscience and to heal a wounded spirit. He goes about them in a melancholy frame of mind, feeling all the time he is engaged in them that he has undertaken a work which is far beyond his strength. He feels just as Israel did at Sinai, when they saw God as "a consuming fire" and trembled under the voice of His commandments.

If I could shut the gate against my thoughts
  And keep out sorrow from this room within,
Or memory could cancel all the notes
  Of my misdeeds, and I unthink my sin:
How free, how clear, how clean my soul should lie,
Discharged of such a loathsome company!

[1] Matthew Arnold.

Or were there other rooms without my heart
That did not to my conscience join so near,
Where I might lodge the thoughts of sin apart
That I might not their clamorous crying hear,
What peace, what joy, what ease should I possess,
Freed from their horrors that my soul oppress!

But, O my Saviour, who my refuge art,
Let Thy dear mercies stand 'twixt them and me,
And be the wall to separate my heart
So that I may at length repose me free;
That peace, and joy, and rest may be within,
And I remain divided from my sin.

(3) *The fear of death*, and of the terrible possibilities (at least) which must be faced just beyond death, is, no doubt, the chief cause of that spirit of bondage which oppresses man in life. The feeling that we are in another's hands, powerless alike over the duration and to a great extent over the circumstances of our own being, is a very formidable thing in itself. If we add to this, that the Power in whose hands we thus are is either unknown to us or supposed to be unfriendly, we have suggested a consideration which has exercised more influence than any other upon the religion, and through it upon the history, of the world. Hence all manner of superstitions: a powerful Being, absolute over our destiny, yet unknown to us in character, in will, and in intention, must be propitiated by such offerings as we possess or can discover, that He may be induced to use His power for protection and not for destruction. Thus the spirit of bondage is the very religion of the heathen.

Why am I loath to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath His sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
  Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
  Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray;
  Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
  Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourned, yet to temptation ran.

O Thou, great Governor of all below!
  If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
  Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling power assist even me,
  Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
  To rule their torrent in the allowed line;
O! aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine.[1]

II.

The Spirit of Adoption.

i. The Adoption.

1. Adoption is that act whereby we are received into the family of God. We are none of us in God's family by nature. It is not a matter, properly speaking, of birth; we are brought into it from without; literally, we are "adopted." And the way in which it is brought about is this;—God has one only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; we are never God's sons in exactly the same sense in which Christ is His Son: indeed, there is a word which is always confined in the Bible to Christ. That word conveys the idea of right, the right which Christ has really in Himself to be a Son. For instance, in the passage in St. John's first epistle in which he says, "Now are we the sons of God," the word is not the same, though it has been translated the same, as when Christ is called the Son of God. The word used concerning us is *children*. It is a close, dear, affectionate, blessed word; but it is not quite the same word as is used about Christ the Son.

[1] Robert Burns.

Christ, then, is the one Son of God. Into the Son, God elects and engrafts members. He elects them everywhere, and He engrafts them just as He pleases; but they are all chosen from without, and brought in. As soon as the union takes place between a soul and Christ, God sees that soul in the relationship in which He sees Christ. He gives it a partnership in the same privileges; He treats it as if it were His own child; He gives it a place and name "better than of sons and daughters." In fact, He has "adopted" it.

2. We must not, however, confound "adoption" and the "spirit of adoption"—as though they were the same thing. They are never, indeed, very far apart; but still they are not the same thing. For adoption, if it stood alone, would be no blessing. Suppose a man's relationships were changed, but his own actual state or moral condition remained unaltered—where would be the benefit? Would it not be an evil and an injury to him? Conceive a man to be placed as a son of God, and yet, all the while, to dislike and hate God; or conceive that a man were called to take his place in spiritual societies, and heavenly fellowships, for which he had, and felt that he had, no taste or fitness whatever; if to that new relationship there were attached particular duties, and the man had no power or adaptation to fulfil those duties—is it not evident that the man, though his position would be really a better one, would be no gainer, but rather a loser, by that change?

¶ A rich man, well educated, "adopts" a poor illiterate child. The child moves in the circle of the society of his adopted father, and shares with him in the indulgences of his wealth. But because that child has no sense of affection towards his adopted father, or because he has no previous training to qualify him for his elevation, or because he has no habit of life to fit and prepare him for his position, the connection is absolutely irksome and injurious to that child; it were better that he never should be "adopted." If the benefactor of that child be indeed a wise man, he will endeavour by kindness and education to give him a filial spirit, and the qualifications which are necessary for his elevation. But, if not, the "adoption," however well intended, and however actually in itself a good thing, will only issue in disappointment and unhappiness.

3. How, then, will the spirit of adoption reveal itself?

(1) The spirit of adoption is a spirit of *reverence*. Not of slavish fear, but of filial reverence. No man can be happy without having some one to revere; some one whom, the more he knows of him, the more he reveres; some one towards whom that process of discovery which is inseparable from prolonged intercourse is a process wholly of increasing reverence, insomuch that they who stand nearest to His throne in heaven veil their faces as they worship (Isa. vi. 2), and they who live nearest to Him on earth are ever found the most humble, the most self-abased, the most full of reverence and awe and godly fear.

¶ David says, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with trembling." Let some one make this rhyme for me;—to be joyful and to fear. My little son Hans can do it to me; but I cannot do it with God. For when I sit and write, or do anything, he sings a little song to me the while; and if he makes it too loud, and I tell him so, then he still sings on, but makes it softer, crooning on with a sweet, little, subdued voice, shyly watching me all the time. So would God have it with us; that we should be always rejoicing, yet with fear and reverence towards Him.[1]

(2) The spirit of adoption is a spirit of *submission*. The cry Abba, Father, is the expression of an entirely resigned will. It was so used on earth by Him who, though He was a Son, yet condescended to learn obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. v. 8). "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done" (Mark xiv. 36; Luke xxii. 42). "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. xxvi. 42). God grant us all betimes that spirit of adoption from which alone that prayer can rise heartily or be heard with acceptance! Well may he who knows that he has indeed a Father in heaven submit himself in all respects to His wise and fatherly will.

¶ The son cannot be true to his sonship unless he is obedient to his father's will; and whenever the Spirit of God is bearing witness to the Divine adoption, whenever the Christian is really living responsive to this witness, there always must be, not constraint, but a glad, free delight in obedience. How practical, how beautiful, is life thus lived under the sweet power of

[1] Luther.

the witnessing Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, in the light of the Fatherhood of God, whom I may call Father. Aye, when memory grieves me for the past, here is my rest: "Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." To be living thus in relation with the Lord God as my own Father, is to be living in peace and security, like a child shielded in its home amidst all the sorrows and perils of life. Then the joy of dying may be mine—I may fall asleep in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God, with this last utterance issuing from my failing spirit, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."[1]

¶ There are few finer stories of obedience than that of Fénelon, the Prince-Archbishop of Cambrai. When his book was condemned by the Pope and cardinals, a book his own judgment told him to be orthodox and helpful, he accepted the public rebuke without a sign of protest. He received the news that the book was proscribed just as he was about to preach to his people in the cathedral. He at once laid aside his sermon, preached on obedience, and showed that he could practise what he preached by the following letter, which he sent to all the clergy:—"Our holy Father, the Pope, has condemned the book entitled *Explication des Maximes des Saints*, in a brief which is spread abroad everywhere, and which you have already seen. We give our adhesion to this brief, dear brethren, as regards the text of the book and the twenty-three points simply, absolutely, and without a shadow of doubt; and we forbid the faithful of the diocese to read or retain the book. God grant that we may never be spoken of save as a pastor who strove to be more docile than the least sheep of the flock, and whose submission knew no limit. Dear Brethren, may the grace of God be with you all. Amen.

FRANÇOIS, Archbishop and Duke of Cambrai."

It must have caused him much suffering to feel that he was looked upon as a heretic, that his enemies were triumphing over his submission; but he felt, and no doubt he was right, that obedience would bring a greater blessing to the Church than any protest.[2]

¶ When our commissioners went a few years ago to Paris to treat with the Spaniards, the latter are said to have desired certain changes in the language of the protocol. With the polished suavity for which they are noted, the Spaniards urged that there be made slight changes in the *words*: no real change in the meaning, they said, simply in the verbiage. And our

[1] Canon G. Body.

[2] G. H. S. Walpole, *Personality and Power*, 88.

Judge Day, at the head of the American Commissioners, listened politely and patiently until the plea was presented. And then he quietly said, "The article will be signed as it *reads*." And the Spaniards protested, with much courtesy. The change asked for was trivial, merely in the language, not in the force of the words. And our men listened patiently and courteously. Then Mr. Day is said to have locked his little square jaw and replied very quietly, "The article will be signed as it reads." And the article was so signed. That is military usage. The surrender was forced. The strength of the American fleets, the prestige of great victory, were behind the quiet man's demand. But that is not the law here. Jesus asks only for what we give freely and spontaneously. He does not want anything except what is given with a free, glad heart. This is to be a *voluntary* surrender. Jesus is a voluntary Saviour. He wants only voluntary followers. He would have us be as Himself. The oneness of spirit leads the way into the intimacy of closest friendship. And that is His thought for us.[1]

(3) The spirit of adoption is a spirit of *trust*. Submission runs on into confidence. The one is a readiness to bear even though the stroke were in anger; the other is the assurance that the stroke will not be in anger, or that, beneath the anger, even if anger should be needful, will lie a deep purpose of eventual mercy. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him (Job. xiii. 15): for even from the very depths of the grave I know that He can and that He will at last raise me up (Heb. xi. 19).

¶ A child's experience is marked above all things by this —freedom from anxiety. The father or mother may look round upon their children with anxious eyes. The demands are many, the resources are limited, the prospects are gloomy. They may have weary days and sleepless nights. But the child in the home has no anxiety; it goes on its way in a position of absolute dependence. The father never has failed, and never will fail; and it sleeps in absolute calmness. So it is when we go out into life. If there is one thing that mars the development of the Christian character within us it is that we should be consumed with corroding cares. Be not anxious. The cares of this world choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful; cares for those we love, cares for ourselves, cares and bitter anxieties over God's own dear Church; cares at times for the tendencies of the life of the nation—multitudes of cares come in. How are we

[1] S. D. Gordon.

to be able to rise above them? It is all very well to say, Be not anxious—how can we fail to be anxious? God would not ask us to live in a fool's paradise, and not face the actual facts under which we have to live. "*Abba, Father,*" *all is in His hands.*[1]

I will not doubt, though all my prayers return
Unanswered from the still, white Realm above;
I shall believe it as an all-wise Love
Which has refused those things for which I yearn;
And though at times I cannot keep from grieving,
Yet the pure ardour of my fixed believing
Undimmed shall burn.

I will not doubt, though sorrows fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees about a hive;
I shall believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;
And though I groan and tremble with my crosses,
I yet shall see, through my severest losses,
The greater gain.

I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails;
I shall believe the hand that never fails
From seeming evil worketh good for me;
And though I weep because those sails are battered
Still will I cry, while my best hopes be shattered,
I trust in Thee.[2]

(4) The spirit of adoption is, in the last place, and throughout, a spirit of *love*. It seems very wonderful that God should care for our love. But it is so. Not in awe, not in fear, not in dread is God glorified, but in that going forth of the human spirit to Him, as to One in whom alone it can rest and be satisfied; that return of love for love; that same yearning of the heart, after an affection unchangeable and inexhaustible, which upon earth, as directed towards a human object, is the source of all our deepest joys and of all our keenest sorrows; this it is which God would have turned towards Himself, and which, when once so turned, is as certain to be satisfied as it is in itself elevating and glorious. Herein is the spirit of adoption fulfilled. Reverence for God, submission to God, confidence in God, all

[1] Canon Body. [2] Ella Wheeler Wilcox, *Poems of Love and Life*, 13.

meet and are consummated in the love of God. May He who has prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards Him, that we, loving Him above all things, may obtain His promises, which exceed all that we can desire, and "be filled with all the fulness of God."

My God, I love Thee; not because
I look for Heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.

Thou, O my Jesus, Thou didst me
Upon the Cross embrace,
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love Thee well,
Not for the sake of winning Heaven,
Or of escaping Hell,

Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord?

Even so I love Thee, and will love,
And in Thy praise will sing,
Solely because Thou art my God,
And my eternal King.

ii. The Cry.

We have already seen that the word adoption distinguishes those who are made sons by an act of grace from the only-begotten Son. But we have also seen that the act of grace gives not only the status but the heart of sons. It is accordingly in this, the true and full, spirit of adoption that we are able to cry, Abba, Father.

1. "Abba, Father." Our Lord, speaking in Aramaic, the vernacular of Palestine, is recorded by St. Mark to have said in

His hour of agony "Abba." And even in the Greek-speaking churches of St. Paul's day, that sacred word was still used side by side with its Greek equivalent, according to the witness of this and the parallel passage, Gal. iv. 6. St. Paul appears to be referring to some occasion on which the Church was in the habit of calling on God with the Aramaic and Greek words side by side, and it is more than likely that he is making a definite reference to the Lord's Prayer, as recited by the Roman and Galatian Christians in the form prescribed for us in St. Luke's version, beginning, "Father." The retention by Greek Christians of an Aramaic word in a familiar religious formula is like the later retention by the Latins of the Greek prayer, *Kyrie eleison*, or the retention by us of the names Te Deum, Magnificat, etc. St. Paul's meaning would come home to us better if we were to read—"whereby we cry Our Father."

¶ The repetition of this word, first in Aramaic and then in Greek, is remarkable, and brings home to us the fact that Christianity had its birth in a bilingual people. The same repetition occurs in Mark xiv. 36 ("Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee") and in Gal. iv. 6: it gives a greater intensity of expression, but would only be natural where the speaker was using in both cases his familiar tongue. Lightfoot (*Hor. Heb.* on Mark xiv. 36) thinks that in the Gospel the word "Abba" only was used by our Lord, and Father added as an interpretation by St. Mark, and that in like manner St. Paul is interpreting for the benefit of his readers. The three passages are, however, all too emotional for this explanation: interpretation is out of place in a prayer. It seems better to suppose that our Lord Himself, using familiarly both languages, and concentrating into this word of all words such a depth of meaning, found Himself impelled spontaneously to repeat the word, and that some among His disciples caught and transmitted the same habit. It is significant, however, of the limited extent of strictly Jewish Christianity that we find no other original examples of the use than these three.[1]

¶ From my recollections as a student in the New College, Edinburgh, I am able to supply an interesting instance of the influence of strong, deep feeling towards a polyglot expression. One morning in the course of his opening prayer in the Senior Hebrew Class, the late Rabbi Duncan was led to use the expression in Ps. lxviii. 35, "O God, thou art terrible out of

[1] Sanday-Headlam, *Romans*.

thy holy places," adding in the same breath, "Thou art Nōra" "venerandus." Indeed the Rabbi had something of a habit of "polyglotting" (if I may coin a word) his ideas.[1]

2. "We *cry*," says the Apostle; and he uses a strong word (often followed by "with a great voice"). It denotes the loud irrepressible cry with which the consciousness of sonship breaks from the Christian heart in prayer.

3. What do we cry? Of all words which can ever express man's thought, the word which comprises most of wisdom, tenderness, and love, is the name of "Father." What a repose lies in that "My Father." And if we were not so familiar with it, the wonder would never cease to awaken the deepest feeling of admiration that we are ever permitted to say of the great, the holy, the awful, the unseen, the unutterable Jehovah, "My Father." And yet, as soon as the Spirit begins to work in a sinner's heart, what is the very first thing that the Spirit plants there? "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say unto him, my father." And if only we could take in the simple conception that God is a "Father," well-nigh the whole work of our religion would be done. It is just what we want, for peace, for holiness, for heaven, to be able to say "My Father." Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, acknowledge it as true; but few, very few think of how much has passed in the deepest counsels and in the sublimest operations of Almighty God, that we might use that paternal name. All heaven had to come down to earth that we might stand to God again in that lost relationship. All the blood of Christ could only purchase it; and no man could ever frame his heart to conceive or his lips to utter it, but by the power of the Holy Ghost; for none can cry, "Abba, Father," but by the "spirit of adoption." It will be a marvel, one day, to find what stupendous processes were necessary before we could really say the two first words of that prayer, which some people call, and most beautifully call, "Our Father."

4. Now some of the signs of this filial spirit which cries "Father," are these—

(1) *Boldness in Prayer.* A child does not ask a father as a stranger asks him. He goes as one who has a right,—as one who

[1] A. Thom, in *The Expository Times*, xx. 527.

has never been refused all his life, and never can be refused to all eternity. If a son finds his father's door for a moment closed, see how he knocks. "That door must open to me." And life grows very earnest in that spirit; and that spirit is all real.

¶ Boldness in prayer was a new ingredient put into the religious consciousness by Christianity, and is a distinctive feature of the Christian faith. To come *boldly* to the throne of grace is a new and living way (Heb. x. 19). This can be seen by a comparison between the way in which man approaches God under the OT dispensation, and the way in which the Christian approaches Him under the new covenant. In the OT man approaches God with fear and trembling; he stands afar off "at the nether part of the mount" (Ex. xix. 17); even "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. xii. 21). In the NT man approaches with boldness "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," "God the judge of all," and "Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling" (Heb. xii. 22–24). It will be found, too, that in this matter of boldness the Christian religion is distinct, not only from the Hebrew, but from all other religions. Fear and shrinking rather than boldness and confidence are, universally, the concomitants of the natural man's approach to the Unseen and Eternal. The Christian alone has boldness of access to the throne of God.[1]

Of what an easie quick accesse,
My blessed Lord, art Thou! how suddenly
May our requests Thine ears invade!
To show that State dislikes not easinesse,
If I but lift mine eyes my suit is made;
Thou canst no more not heare then Thou canst die.

Of what supreme almightie power
Is Thy great arm, which spans the east and west
And tacks the centre to the sphere!
By it do all things live their measur'd houre;
We cannot ask the thing which is not there,
Blaming the shallownesse of our request.

Of what unmeasurable love
Art Thou possest, Who, when Thou couldst not die,
Wert fain to take our flesh and curse,
And for our sakes in person sinne reprove;
That by destroying that which ty'd Thy purse,
Thou mightst make way for liberalitie!

[1] D. Russell Scott, in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ii. 786.

Since, then, these three wait on Thy throne,
Ease, Power, and Love, I value Prayer so,
That were I to leave all but one,
Wealth, fame, endowments, vertues, all should go;
I and deare Prayer would together dwell,
And quickly gain for each inch lost an ell.[1]

(2) *Service for Love.* He does not want wages; but he receives rewards. He does not want them; he works for another motive; and yet he does not know that he has another motive, for he never stops to ask what his motive is. "Of course I love."

¶ It is just the old story of the way the birds got their wings. At first God gave the birds their wings as burdens, and bade them carry the burdens. They obeyed, and laid their burdens on their shoulders and wrapped them about their hearts, when lo! their burdens became their wings, and carried them. So it is with every life that in unselfish service takes up the tasks and duties God appoints. As we carry them on our shoulders and wrap them about our hearts, instead of weighing us down they carry us. Our burdens become our pinions, our duties our privileges, our service becomes our reward, our sacrifice our song. Glory is a flame lit in the altar fires of service. Heaven is the homeland of all who travel a thorn-path of duty to the cross-crowned hill where life is laid down for the sake of others.

When God first made a little bird
For sheer delight,
He gifted it with power of song
But not of flight.

Then by its side He gently laid
Those untried things
That we, in human parlance, call
A pair of wings.

And said, "My little one, this load
Uplift and see,
Beneath this strange disguise, my love's
Sweet thought for thee."

The feathered darling serious grew;
A sudden sob
Choked all the music in its throat
And seemed to rob

[1] George Herbert.

The air of sunshine; yet it gave
A patient nod,
And said, "I'll bear it for your sake,
Dear Father God."

Then on reluctant shoulders, firm
The burden laid;
And lo, the merry winds of heaven
About it played,

Until in very ecstasy
It spurned the ground,
And, borne upon its lifted load,
Glad freedom found.

(3) *Fulness of Possession.* He has a present possession in the whole universe. All creation is his Father's house, and he can say, "Everything in it,—everything that is great, and everything that is little,—everything that is happy, and everything that is unhappy,—every cloud and every sun-ray,—it is mine, on to death itself."

¶ John Kendrick Bangs tells about a little boy who one night cried for the moon. So his father, who was a kind and generous as well as a wise man, gave it to him. "You may have the moon," said the father, "only you must not be selfish about it. The very best place to keep the moon is up there in the heaven, where it will give you light by night; and of course you want it to give light to me and your mother and other people also. You may have the moon just as long as you are unselfish, but when you grow greedy then the moon will belong to some one else who will make better use of it." And one day when the lad wanted the ocean his father gave him that also on a similar condition. "You must not carry it away and bottle it up," he said. "It is yours, but you must not be selfish. Let other people bathe in your ocean and sail boats on your ocean. Indeed, it is very much better for you to have others using your ocean, for it would not be nearly so interesting without ships sailing up and down to all parts of the world to bring you and me and your mother tea and coffee and bananas, and other fishing boats going out to catch our fish for us." So when the lad wanted a great forest the father gave it to him, and when he asked for the mountains the father gave him the mountains also, until by and by he owned the whole universe, but always on condition that he would not be selfish but would let other people enjoy his moon and his ocean and his forest and his mountains with him.

It is not always easy to distinguish between the serious and the quizzical mood of Mr. Bangs, but I think in this instance he meant to read us a parable. All things are ours. The Great Father gave them to us, at the same time bestowing upon us the capacity to use and enjoy them. The forest belongs to the man who loves it, the mountain belongs to the man who loves it, and the crisp winter landscape belongs to the man who, to use Job's phrase, has "entered into the treasures of the snow."[1]

(4) *Readiness to Depart.* For he knows very well what those ever-present words mean, "In my Father's house are many mansions." And, if the love of an unseen Father has been so sweet, what will it be to look in His face?

¶ Death is to Francis, the lover of all life, a dear and tender sister; to others of like mind, the mother of life, or a strong brother, angel of pity; and for St. Paul, to whom to live was Christ, to die was gain of Christ. Now, even I in my low measure begin to see my deep door as a gateway of fulfilment; and I must turn my eyes away to my place in God on this side of the door, lest even I desire death too much.

I have no tormenting fear; my door is mine alone, and beyond is my own place again. I know I have to dread no gloom which is not already mine; but while I am still on earth I would learn more of the life of Paradise foreshadowed here, that in the greater light I may see the beauty which is of Avalon.

Therefore, for all this cause, although I share the optimism of the saints, I dare not long for death as they have longed; in me nature groans and travails still. I look towards it only as a step in life which I hope that I shall gladly take when it comes before my waiting feet. I will call it a transfiguration towards my truth, and I will dread it only as I dread a truer vision of my truth.[2]

What if some morning when the stars were paling,
  And the dawn whitened, and the East was clear,
Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence
  Of a benignant Spirit standing near;

And I should tell him, as he stood beside me,
  "This is our Earth—most friendly Earth, and fair;
Daily its sea and shore through sun and shadow
  Faithful it turns, robed in its azure air:

[1] F. O. Hall, *Soul and Body*, 139.

[2] "A Modern Mystic's Way."

There is blest living here, loving and serving,
  And quest of truth and serene friendships dear:
But stay not, Spirit! Earth has one destroyer—
  His name is Death: flee, lest he find thee here!"

And what if then, while still the morning brightened,
  And freshened in the elm the summer's breath,
Should gravely smile on me the gentle angel,
  And take my hand, and say, "My name is Death."[1]

[1] E. Rowland Sill.

The Assurance of Sonship.

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* It is one and the same sermon by Dr. Maclaren that is found in all these places.

The Assurance of Sonship.

The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.—Rom. viii. 16.

The subject is the Witness of the Spirit; and we may ask these questions about it—

I. What is the Spirit a Witness to?
II. Why is the Witness of the Spirit needed?
III. How does the Spirit make this Witness?
IV. Are there any ways of confirming the Witness?

I.

To What is the Spirit a Witness?

1. In answer to this question the words of St. Paul are quite explicit. The witness is to our Sonship—"The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." "The Holy Spirit," says Swete, "enables the members of Christ to realize their consecration by creating in them a sense of their filial relation to God, and opening and maintaining communication between God and the individual life. The Spirit in the human heart is 'the spirit of the adoption' which corresponds with the spirit of sonship in the Christ, and cries in us as in Him, Abba, Father."[1]

2. The witness of the Spirit, then, is given to assure us of the fact of our sonship. Being adopted into the family of God we receive the Spirit of adoption, and in that Spirit we are able to express our filial desires; we cry, "Abba, Father." But we need fuller, more sure, more abiding confirmation of our position as children. And the same Spirit of adoption provides it. For not only is His presence a witness to our adoption, but one of His very offices, if we may use the word, is that of suggesting

[1] *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament*, 346.

and confirming the witness of our own spirits. Without that suggestion and confirmation we should have little confidence in our approach to God, and little joy in our Christian life.

¶ A religious life dependent for its confidence on mere inference would always be exposed to those fluctuations which constitution and temperament encourage. Some impressions of the mind are healthy; some are morbid; some are presumptuous. In some cases the premises on which the soul founded its judgments would be false; or the process of reasoning would be unsound; or the reasoner himself prejudiced and incompetent. For, as a rule, no man is an infallible judge of his own feelings or actions. A tender conscience, a diffident estimate of one's own character, a morbid tendency, would rob the truest soul of peace; while, on the other hand, a native buoyancy of disposition, a sunny temperament, an indulgent conscience, would interpret the most equivocal evidence in its favour.[1]

¶ I would remind you that this is not a luxury, such as when one lies listlessly on one's body by the Mediterranean, basking in the sunshine. God does not afford us privileges merely to increase the luxuriousness of the Christian life. I do not for a moment say that there is no life where this witness of the Spirit is not recognized and rejoiced in, but I do say there is no real Christian life where that witness is not. Wherever there is adoption, and adoption responded to, there is the witness of the adopting Spirit. Continually we come across people who are in a state of restlessness and perplexity, because they know nothing of the inner witnessing of the Spirit; and it may be after frequent interviews, when one seems baffled and beaten, that one drops some sentence which awakens a response, and the hearer says, "Oh, if that is what you mean, I know it already." All believers know it, only they do not know they do. It is true you may be in a state of real living union with Christ and yet experience perplexity. But you will never come to be all that a Christian should be until this inner witness is clearly yours, and until you can say with full utterance, without any stammering whatever, "Abba, Father."[2]

II.

Why is the Witness of the Spirit needed?

1. The Witness of the Spirit is needed *to enable us to enter into perfect communion with God.* This is the necessity and glory of Christian life; but until we feel His power possessing us,

[1] R. N. Young. [2] Canon G. Body.

until we see the smile of the Father behind every sorrow, we shall fear Him, and flee from His presence; not until then can we perfectly commune with Him. In some natures, particularly in the stages of infancy and youth, God's presence seems to address itself to the emotions. There is an instinctive yearning for a perfect and absolute object of love, trust, worship. A vast void waits to be filled with the apprehension of infinite excellence, infinite sympathy, infinite friendship. The heart cannot rest away from God. Till some unknown secret of love is distilled there, stabs of sudden pain are felt, grievous and incurable wounds, strain and distress of the sensibilities. The peace of home, the accord of marriage, the wealth of far-ranging friendship, only palliate the trouble for a time. At last a strange power of loving God springs up within the fevered, distraught, and half-famished affections. That implies and guarantees an accomplished reconciliation. The persuasion comes by the pathway of these tender, sensitive, love-craving conditions of temper, and seems to grow out of them. But it is the great Spirit Himself who witnesses in and through the affections. The heart-chords respond to some vibration in His own nature. A God who irresistibly makes Himself an object of love must be a God who is already reconciled. An assurance wrought in this way is just as authoritatively Divine as though proclaimed by a voice from the skies.

Wisest of sparrows that sparrow which sitteth alone
  Perched on the housetop, its own upper chamber, for nest·
Wisest of swallows that swallow which timely has flown
  Over the turbulent sea to the land of its rest:
    Wisest of sparrows and swallows,
      If I were as wise!

Wisest of spirits that spirit which dwelleth apart
  Hid in the Presence of God for a chapel and nest,
Sending a wish and a will and a passionate heart
  Over the eddy of life to that
      Presence in rest:
  Seated alone and in peace till
      God bids it arise.[1]

2. We need the Witness of the Spirit *in order to realize our spiritual inheritance.* You know the feeling of sadness which

[1] Christina G. Rossetti.

comes when gazing at night into immensity—the thought that this short life will soon be over, and we shall be swept away and forgotten, like withered leaves before the drifting winds of autumn. Then how grandly comes the witness to our sonship, saying, "Thou cast down? Look up into immensity, it is all thine, fear not, thou art a child of the Infinite."

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness—
Round our restlessness, His rest.[1]

3. And we need the Witness of the Spirit *in order to comprehend the glory of suffering.* Mark the connexion in Paul's words between the sufferings of this life, and the glory to be revealed hereafter, as if he had said,—"as the suffering is great, so also shall be the glory." None but the man who has the "witness of the Spirit" is able to look through the sorrow to the blessedness hereafter.

¶ The paper you sent me speaks of the deteriorating effect of pain. I most entirely recognize the accuracy of the observation. It is one of the most terrible features of suffering. But then it must be remembered that anything, not only pain, may be deteriorating—either by fault of the will, if health and faculties are unimpaired, or, as is, we hope, often the case in illness, by failure of that physical organization through which the will acted soundly and loyally when the man was in health. And how terribly deteriorating is the effect sometimes, not merely of success, but of a simply quiet, undisturbed life. We are poor creatures, and yet we have in us the making of heroes and saints.[2]

III.

How does the Spirit bear Witness?

"The Spirit himself," says the Apostle, "beareth witness *with* our spirit." The verb which he employs denotes a joint testimony.

[1] Elizabeth Barrett Browning. [2] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 276.

The cry, "Abba, Father," is a human cry. It expresses our consciousness of a filial relation to God. But it is also superhuman. For it is prompted by the Spirit of God, "*in whom* we cry, Abba, Father."

1. Now observe here, first of all, that Paul distinguishes between the Spirit of God and our "spirit." For "the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." His witness to our sonship is distinct from our personal consciousness of sonship. Again, "*we* know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." What He desires for us He must know; and there are times when He is able to draw us into perfect and intelligent sympathy with His own thought and His own longing; but there are other times when the great things that He desires for us transcend our vision and our hope; and then the Spirit who dwells in us carries on His intercession for us alone; He is too near to us, too intimately one with us, for us not to be conscious of the energy and earnestness of His desires; and we ourselves, as the result of His energy and earnestness, may have a vague and even a passionate longing for some infinite good, but what it is we cannot tell.

2. There are therefore two witnesses to our sonship. As two witnesses were required, under the Law, to establish a charge that was made against any man; so, under the Gospel, we have two witnesses to establish our claim to be the children of God,—first, the witness of our own spirit, and then the second and far greater Witness, the Holy Spirit Himself; and by the mouth of these two witnesses shall our claim be fully established. If our own spirit were our only witness, we might hesitate to receive its testimony, for it is fallible and partial; but when the infallible and impartial Spirit of God confirms the unfaltering witness of our own heart and conscience, then may we have confidence toward God, and believe without hesitation that we are indeed the children of the Most High God.

¶ As you look at the clock in the tower of some great public building, you remember that behind the gilt letters of the dial there is an elaborate mechanism which moves the fingers. But you also remember that, after all, everything does not rest upon

the exact weight and rhythm of the pendulum that swings there, or the faultless going-order of the well-cleaned wheels. It is possible for the local mechanism to be at fault and to vary in its time-keeping virtues, and the citizens are not left to the mercy of its supposed inerrancy. At noon a gun is fired or a ball made to fall, or some other delicate adjustment is brought into play by an electric current sent direct from the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, the centre of scientific precision and faultless and authoritative reckoning. There is local mechanism fairly trustworthy in its way, but that is guaranteed and controlled by the message of absolute astronomical truth.[1]

3. These two witnesses must agree. Notice the words: "the Spirit himself beareth witness *with* our spirit." It is not so much a revelation made to my spirit, considered as the recipient of the testimony, as a revelation made in or with my spirit considered as co-operating in the testimony. It is not that my spirit says one thing, bears witness that I am a child of God; and that the Spirit of God comes in by a distinguishable process, with a separate evidence, to say Amen to my persuasion; but it is that there is one testimony which has a conjoint origin—the origin from the Spirit of God as true source, and the origin from my own soul as recipient and co-operant in that testimony.

¶ To produce a perfect chord in music two things are necessary. The things brought into play must be attuned to each other. Unless there is this perfect adjustment when the notes are struck, instead of the faultless chord you will have jarring, dissonance, torture. So our wills must be brought into agreement with the will of the Spirit. We must forsake all sin, and give ourselves up to His skilful modulation and adjustment.

I saw on earth another light
  Than that which lit my eye
Come forth, as from my soul within,
  And from a higher sky.

Its beams still shone unclouded on,
  When in the distant west
The sun I once had known had sunk
  For ever to his rest.

[1] T. G. Selby.

And on I walked—though dark the night,
Nor rose his orb by day,—
As one to whom a surer guide
Was pointing out the way.

'Twas brighter far than noonday's beam,
'Twas duty shone within,
And lit, as by a lamp from heaven,
The world's dark track of sin.[1]

(1) From the teaching of this passage, or from any of the language which Scripture uses with regard to the inner witness, it is not to be inferred that there will rise up in a Christian's heart, from some origin consciously beyond the sphere of his own nature, a voice with which he has nothing to do; which at once, by its own character, by something peculiar and distinguishable about it, by something strange in its nature, or out of the ordinary course of human thinking, shall certify itself to be not *his* voice at all, but *God's* voice. That is not the direction in which we are to look for the witness of God's Spirit. It is evidence borne, indeed, by the Spirit of God; but it is evidence borne not only to our spirit, but through it, with it. The testimony is one, the testimony of a man's own emotion, and own conviction, and own desire, the cry, "Abba, Father."

(2) Again, there are those who conceive that a certain feeling of assurance suddenly rises in the Christian, which is a conviction of his election, and that this feeling is the witness of the Holy Spirit. Hence, men have waited for it with anxiety. Many of the most earnest have prayed in tears of agony for its dawning. They have wasted many a darkened hour by the fear lest this feeling should never come, and have longed, like men watching for the morning, for the moment when it should suddenly flash across the darkness of the soul and light it with confident joy. Now, we need not dispute the fact that a sudden emotion may come, but this is certainly not the assurance of which Paul is speaking here. For he speaks of a Divine Spirit witnessing with our spirit; to rely on any emotion as certainty is to rely upon our own spirit bearing witness with itself; for if we trust to any feeling in us we are not trusting to the Spirit of God.

[1] Jones Very.

¶ The substance of the conviction which is lodged in the human spirit by the testimony of the Spirit of God is not primarily directed to our relation or feelings to God, but to a far grander thing than that—to God's feelings and relation to us.[1]

IV.

How is the Witness confirmed?

The confirmation of sonship is the spirit of a son. There is no evidence that can supersede the actual recognition of God as Father, the actual filial affection which prompts the cry, "Abba, Father." And so, there is no evidence of the Spirit and no confirmation of His witness to be compared to the fact that we are in our daily life bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. But there are three ways in particular to be noticed here in which the evidence of the Spirit can be confirmed. They are the ways in which St. Paul is showing the operation of the Spirit.

1. Have we obtained deliverance from a carnal mind? "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The carnal is not always the sensual; it includes those temptations into which a man's spirit has infused a charm. Freedom from this is the first sign of sonship. Here, then, is the witness: the old affections are being uprooted; a deep desire is being created after perfect purity; the chains of sin are being snapped. The heart with its love, the head with its understanding, the conscience with its quick response to the law of duty, the will with its resolutions—these are all, as sanctified by Him, the witness of His Spirit; and the life with its strenuous obedience, with its struggles against sin and temptation, with its patient persistence in the quiet path of ordinary duty, as well as with the times when it rises into heroic stature of resignation or allegiance, the martyrdom of death and the martyrdom of life, this too is all (in so far as it is pure and right) the work of that same Spirit. The test of the inward conviction is the outward life; and they that have the witness of the Spirit within them have the light of their life lit by the

[1] A. Maclaren.

Spirit of God, whereby they may read the handwriting on the heart, and be sure that it is God's and not their own.

2. Have we the spirit of Prayer? Sometimes the Christian prayer transcends all words. The heart's wounded affections—blighted hopes—unexpressed longings—all burn in one deep impassioned cry. This spirit of prayer possessing us is a sign of adoption.

3. Have we the spirit of Aspiration? "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." This is a sign of sonship—life's imperfectness the ground of hope. The feeling that here there is no rest—the whole life becoming one prayer for more light, greater power, deeper love—not, mark, the cry for happiness, but the cry—

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
Even though it be a cross
That raiseth me.

That aspiration, possessing the soul, forms the power of the Christian, and is a witness to his sonship of the Father.

¶ An aspiration is a joy for ever, a possession as solid as a landed estate, a fortune which we can never exhaust, and which gives us year by year a revenue of pleasurable activity. To have many of these is to be spiritually rich.[1]

The white doves brood low
With innocent flight.
Higher, my soul, higher!
Into the night!—
Into black night!

Beyond where the eagle
Soars strong to the sun.
Nought hast thou, if only
Earth's stars be won—
Earth's stars are won.

[1] Robert Louis Stevenson, *El Dorado*.

Beyond, where God's angels
Stand silent in might,
Higher, my soul, higher!
Into the light!—
Straight to God's light![1]

[1] Maarten Maartens.

Joint-Heirs with Christ.

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JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST.

If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.—Rom. viii. 17.

"THE eighth chapter of Romans," says Spurgeon, "is like the garden of Eden, full of all manner of delights. Here you have all necessary doctrines to feed upon, and luxurious truths with which to satisfy your soul. One might well have been willing to be shut up as a prisoner in Paradise; and one might well be content to be shut up to this one chapter, and never to be allowed to preach from any other part of God's Word. If this were the case, one might find a sermon in every line; nay, more than that, whole volumes might be found in a single sentence by any one who was truly taught of God. I might say of this chapter, 'All its paths drop fatness.' It is among the other chapters of the Bible like Benjamin's mess, which was five times as much as that of any of his brothers. We must not exalt one part of God's Word above another; yet, as 'one star differeth from another star in glory,' this one seems to be a star of the first magnitude, full of the brightness of the grace and truth of God. It is an altogether inexhaustible mine of spiritual wealth, and I invite the saints of God to dig in it, and to dig in it again and again. They will find, not only that it hath dust of gold, but also huge nuggets, which they shall not be able to carry away by reason of the weight of the treasure."

The subject of this verse of the chapter is the Inheritance of the children of God.

I. The Inheritance belongs to the Children.
II. The Inheritance is God.
III. It is a Joint-Inheritance with Christ.
IV. The condition of enjoying it is that we suffer with Christ.

I.

The Inheritance belongs to the Children.

"If children, then heirs."

1. It is children of God who are heirs of God. It is by union with Christ Jesus, the Son, to whom the inheritance belongs, that they who believe on His name receive power to become the sons of God, and with that power the possession of the inheritance.

2. What, then, are the marks of sonship?

(1) If we are sons of God, we shall know it partly by the indwelling of the Spirit, as Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"; and in the verse before our text we read, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God."

(2) The children of God have another mark by which they can be recognized, namely, that there is a likeness in them to their Heavenly Father. If a man says to you, "I am the son of So-and-so,"—some old friend of yours,—you look into his face to see whether you can trace any likeness to his father. So, when a man says, "I am a child of God," we have the right to expect that there shall be at least some trace of the character of God visible in his walk and conversation.

(3) But the chief evidence of our being children of God lies in our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." There are many evidences of the life of God in the soul, but there is no other that is so abiding as the possession of faith in Jesus Christ.

¶ It is not easy to imagine a more cautious, lawyer-like record than that of Lord Eldon: "I was born, I believe, on the 4th of June 1751." We may suppose that this hesitating statement refers to the date, and not to the fact, of his birth. Many, however, are just as uncertain about their spiritual birth. It

is a grand thing to be able to say, "We have passed from death unto life," even though we may not be able to post a date to it.

3. The Inheritance belongs to *all* God's children. It does not always follow in human reckoning, "if children, then heirs," because in our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir's rights, and the heir's title. It is not so in the family of God. Man, as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have no more real right to, in the sight of God, than the rest of the family —may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true-born, may go without; but it is not so in the family of God. All God's children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last shall be as much His heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into His glory.

II.

The Inheritance is God.

"Heirs of God."

1. God Himself is His greatest gift. The loftiest blessing which we can receive is that we should be heirs, possessors of God. There is a sublime and wonderful mutual possession spoken of in Scripture: the Lord is the inheritance of Israel, and Israel is the inheritance of the Lord. "The Lord hath taken you to be to him a people of inheritance," says Moses: "Ye are a people for a possession," says Peter. And, on the other hand, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance," says David: "Ye are the heirs of God," echoes Paul. On earth and in heaven the heritage of the children of the Lord is God Himself. He is *in* them to make them "partakers of the Divine nature," and *for* them in all His attributes and actions.

2. "Heirs of God"—can we enumerate some of the parts of our inheritance?

(1) The children of God are heirs of God's *Promises.* If you

turn to the 1st chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 14th verse, you will find that we are there called "heirs of salvation." Looking on a little further in the same Epistle, in the 6th chapter, and the 17th verse, you will find that we are called "the heirs of promise." In his Epistle to Titus, the 3rd chapter, and the 7th verse, Paul calls us "heirs according to the hope of eternal life"; while James says, in the 2nd chapter of his Epistle, at the 5th verse, that we are "heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him"; and Peter says, in his First Epistle, the 3rd chapter, and 7th verse, that we are "heirs together of the grace of life."

¶ The promises of men are often lightly given. "A canvassing party," says Sir Wilfrid Lawson, "went to the house of an elector in Manchester, but only his wife was at home. They explained to her what they had come for, and on leaving said: 'You know what we want, we want your husband's vote for Mr. ——; do you think he'll promise?' 'Oh yes,' she said, 'I think he'll promise, he's promised every one who came yet.'"[1] God promises nothing but what He knows He can perform, nothing but what He means to perform.

A living, loving, lasting word,
My listening ear believing heard,
  While bending down in prayer;
Like a sweet breeze that none can stay,
It passed my soul upon its way,
  And left a blessing there.

Then joyful thoughts that come and go,
By paths the holy angels know,
  Encamped around my soul;
As in a dream of blest repose,
'Mid withered reeds a river rose,
  And through the desert stole.

I lifted up my eyes to see—
The wilderness was glad for me,
  Its thorns were bright with bloom;
And onward travellers, still in sight,
Marked out a path of shining light
  And shade unmixed with gloom.

[1] G. W. E. Russell's *Memoir of Sir Wilfrid Lawson*, 97.

Oh, sweet the strains of those before,
The weary knees are weak no more,
The faithful heart is strong.
But sweeter, nearer, from above,
That word of everlasting love,
The promise and the song.[1]

(2) We are heirs of God's *Possessions.* When God gives Himself to us, He gives us with Himself all that He has. And this means treasures vast and immeasurable. The stars in their glittering splendour are the dust of His feet. The kingdoms of the world are to Him the small dust of the balance. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul says: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

¶ I stood one time with a big-hearted friend of mine who has been for twenty years minister of a small church in a humble community where most of the people were fisher-folk winning their livelihood from the sea. The veranda of this man's humble home overlooked the harbour and the ocean beyond. It was evening, and the lights were appearing one by one on the fleet of boats in the harbour. We had been speaking about the city, with its advantages and its enticements. My friend had grown meditative, and was evidently thinking of what he had missed in these twenty years of isolation. He said, "Sometimes I think I ought to go away from here—ought to have gone years ago. I should probably be more of a man if I had." And then with an impulsive and indescribable gesture he stretched his hands out as if to embrace the harbour and the ocean itself, and said, "That compensates for all." For a moment he made me feel my own poverty. He owned the ocean because he loved it.[2]

(3) We are heirs of God's *Attributes.* Is He omnipotent? His omnipotence is ours, to be our defence. Is He omniscient? His infinite wisdom is ours, to guide us. Is He eternal? His eternity is ours, that we may ever be preserved. Is He full of love and grace? Then all His love, as though there were not another to be loved, is mine, and all His grace, as though there were never another sinner to partake of it, is mine. "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

[1] A. L. Waring. [2] F. O. Hall.

My eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddës grace:
No other care nor hope is mine;
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above:
'Tis namèd where God's name is said,
'Tis Love, 'tis heavenly Love.

And every gentle heart,
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.[1]

3. But if the Inheritance which is God—God in all His promises, possessions, attributes—God Himself, is ours, when may we enter upon it? In its fulness, in the supremacy of its bliss, we must wait till the suffering is ended. But in some measure we may enter into possession here and now.

¶ Our estates are not all beyond the river we call death. That is where we make an impoverishing mistake. We are heirs not only of "great expectations" but of great possessions. Superlatively rich are our expectations, but we have more than a competency by the way. Devonshire is a peculiarly rich and fruitful county, but it overflows into Somersetshire, and we are in the enjoyment of some of the glory before we reach the coveted spot. And so it is of heaven and ultimate glory.

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

But the glory overflows! There is something of the coveted country even in the highway of time—

The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets,
Before we reach the heavenly fields
Or walk the golden streets.[2]

[1] Robert Bridges. [2] J. H. Jowett.

III.

IT IS A JOINT-INHERITANCE.

"Joint-heirs with Christ."

The proper possessor of the Inheritance indeed is "the Son of God," the only-begotten of the Father. But His brethren are to share in it. All that glory, therefore, which the Lord had in enjoyment with the Father as His well-beloved Son before the Incarnation, together with whatever added glory the Incarnation and Atonement brought Him—all is to be shared with His brethren. He is the First-born, but He is the First-born among many brethren.

1. He cannot possibly be heir alone; for union with Christ is the very reason why we are heirs of God, and union with Christ must for us also culminate in glory. It is not merely because the joy hereafter seems required in order to vindicate God's love to His children, who here reap sorrow from their sonship, that the discipline of life cannot but end in blessedness. That ground of mere compensation is a low one on which to rest the certainty of future bliss. But the inheritance is sure to all who here suffer with Christ, because the one cause—union with the Lord—produces both the present result of fellowship in His sorrows and the future result of joy in His joy, of possession of His possessions. The inheritance is sure because Christ possesses it now.

¶ Our right to it stands or falls with Christ's right to the same inheritance. We are co-heirs; if He be truly an heir, so are we; and if He be not, neither are we. Our two interests are intertwined and made one, we have neither of us any heirship apart from the other; we are joint-heirs, Christ jointly with us, ourselves jointly with Christ. So, then, it follows that if there be any flaw in the will, so that it be not valid, if it be not rightly signed, sealed, and delivered, then it is no more valid for Christ than it is for us. If we get nothing, Christ gets nothing; if there should be no heaven for us, there is no heaven for Christ. If there should be no throne for us, there would be no throne for Him; if the promise should utterly fail of fulfilment to the least of the joint-heritors, it must also fail of accomplishment to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.[1]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

2. And this lets us see how great the inheritance is. For if we are to be joint-heirs with Christ, it cannot be a little thing that we are to share with Him. Can you imagine what the Father would give to His Son as the reward of the travail of His soul? Give yourself time to think what the everlasting God would give to His equal Son, who took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Can you think of a reward that would be large enough for Him? Let the Father's love and the Father's justice judge.

IV.

The Condition.

"If so be that we suffer with him."

1. One condition of heirship the Apostle has stated already —that we be children of God. Is this another? It is not another in the same indispensable way. The one is the indispensable condition of all; the other is but the means for the operation of the condition. The one—being sons, "joint-heirs with Christ" —is the root of the whole matter; the other—the "suffering with him"—is but the various process by which from the root there come "the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear." Given the sonship—if it is to be worked out into power and beauty, there must be suffering with Christ. But unless there be sonship, there is no possibility of inheriting God; discipline and suffering will be of no use at all.

2. Nor does the Apostle mean to tell us that if there were such a case as that of a man becoming a son of God, and having no occasion or opportunity afterwards, by brevity of life or other causes, for passing through the discipline of sorrow, his inheritance would be forfeited. We must always take such passages as this, which seem to make the discipline of the world an essential part of the preparing of us for glory, in conjunction with the other undeniable truth which completes them, that when a man has the love of God in his heart, however feebly, however newly, there and then he is fit for the inheritance.

3. Yet the condition is there—"if so be that we suffer with him." And how can it be otherwise? Is not the whole secret of the inheritance that we be united to Christ—that it is a joint inheritance? And when were ever two hearts united here that the union did not bring with it pain? It cannot be otherwise, and it has never been. "Let love clasp grief, lest *both* be drowned."

A blue bird built his nest
Here in my breast.
O bird of Light! Whence comest thou?
Said he: From God above:
My name is Love.

A mate he brought one day,
Of plumage gray.
O bird of Night! Why comest thou?
Said she: Seek no relief!
My name is Grief.[1]

i. Christ's Suffering.

1. Christ's suffering is in one sense *solitary*. It stands as a thing by itself and unapproachable, a solitary pillar rising up, above the waste of time, to which all men everywhere are to turn with the one thought, "I can do nothing like that; I need to do nothing like it; it has been done once, and once for all; and what I have to do is simply to lie down before Him, and let the power and the blessings of that death and those sufferings flow into my heart." The Divine Redeemer makes eternal redemption. The sufferings of Christ—the sufferings of His life and the sufferings of His death—both because of the nature which bore them and of the aspect which they wore in regard to us, are in their source, in their intensity, and in their character, and consequences, unapproachable, incapable of repetition, and needing no repetition whilst the world shall stand.

2. But Christ's sufferings may in another sense be shared by us. The very books and writers in the New Testament that preach most broadly Christ's sole, all-sufficient, eternal redemption for the world by His sufferings and death, turn round and

[1] Laurence Alma Tadema.

say to us too, "Be planted together in the likeness of his death"; you are "crucified to the world" by the Cross of Christ; you are to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ." He Himself speaks of our drinking of the cup that He drank of, and being baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with, if we desire to sit yonder on His throne, and share with Him in His glory.

3. All the suffering that came upon Christ came out of one of two roots—the root of obedience or the root of sympathy.

(1) *Obedience.* He went out on behalf of the word of truth, of meekness, and righteousness. He bore witness to the supernatural truth of His mission before the Sadducees. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God." He bore witness to the deep, vital, progressive righteousness which had found utterance in the older prophets, but full expression through the lips of the Son of Man. Before the face of the Pharisees He bore witness to the word of truth and righteousness linked by meekness. Again and again the people at large would have come and made Him a King. But the bruised reed would He not break, and the smoking flax would He not quench, nor would He cry nor cause His voice to be heard in the street; He bore witness to the word of truth and righteousness. All indignation, all opposition, all rejection, even death, came simply out of that obedience to the uttermost of His mission.

(2) *Sympathy.* His pain came also from deliberate sympathy. Our Lord describes the life of the selfish: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." Look at the grain of corn. It is the very symbol of a selfish life. There it is, a beautiful thing in its golden integument; but for ever, in its beauty, barren. It must give itself up to let the moisture of the ground rot that integument of its selfish life; for only in abandoning itself can the vital principle be made to germinate within it and bring forth fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. So our Lord lays before us the principle of the selfish life which He, in His own example, utterly abandons. He hid not Himself from His own flesh; He would not use the supernatural or natural powers of His position to secure

advantages to Himself. He simply went out, a man among men. He bore their sicknesses and carried their sorrows.[1]

¶ There is a great word used of Jesus, and by Him, nine times in the Gospels, the word *compassion*. The sight of a leprous man, or of a demon-distressed man, *moved* Him. The great multitudes huddling together after Him, so pathetically, like leaderless sheep, eager, hungry, tired, always stirred Him to the depths. The lone woman, bleeding her heart out through her eyes, as she followed the body of her boy out—He could not stand that at all. And when He was so moved, He always did something. He clean forgot His own bodily needs, so absorbed did He become in the folks around Him. The healing touch was quickly given, the demonized man released from his sore bonds, the disciples organized for a wider movement to help, the bread multiplied so that the crowds could find something comforting between their hunger-cleaned teeth. The sight of suffering always stirred Him. The presence of a crowd seemed always to touch and arouse Him peculiarly. He never learned that sort of city culture that can look unmoved upon suffering or upon a leaderless, helpless crowd. That word compassion, used of Him, is both deep and tender in its meaning. The word, actually used under our English, means to have the bowels or heart, the seat of emotion, greatly stirred.[2]

ii. Our Suffering.

1. If a Christian has the Spirit and life of Christ in him, his career will be moulded, imperfectly but really, by the same Spirit that dwelt in his Lord; and similar causes will produce corresponding effects. The life of Christ which—Divine, pure, incapable of copy and repetition—in one aspect has ended for ever for men, remains to be lived, in another view of it, by every Christian, who in like manner has to fight with the world; who in like manner has to resist temptation; who in like manner has to stand, by God's help, pure and sinless, in so far as the new nature of him is concerned, in the midst of a world that is full of evil.

2. It is not meant that we are to go about seeking pain. It is not meant that we are to refuse the healthy joys that life offers us. It is not meant that we should be morbid and sentimental. It *is* meant that we should set ourselves to follow,

[1] Bishop Gore. [2] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 103.

deliberately and really, if imperfectly, the principles of our Lord's living.

3. Of what nature, then, are the things which we have to suffer with Christ if we are to be glorified with Him?

(1) *Trial.* Let us learn to look upon all trial as being at once the seal of our sonship, and the means by which God puts it within our power to win a higher place, a loftier throne, a nobler crown, a closer fellowship with Him "who hath suffered, being tempted," and who will receive into His own blessedness and rest them that are tempted. "The child, though he be an heir, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors." God puts us here in the school of sorrow under that stern tutor and governor, and gives us the opportunity of "suffering with Christ," that by the daily crucifixion of our old nature, by the lessons and blessings of outward calamities and change, there may grow up in us a still nobler, purer, and more perfect Divine life; and that we may so be made capable—more capable, and capable of more—of that inheritance for which the only necessary thing is the death of Christ, and the only fitness is faith in His name.

¶ Amidst the eternal illusion that envelops us one thing is certain—*suffering.* It is the corner-stone of life. On it humanity is founded as on a firm rock. Outside it all is uncertainty. It is the sole evidence of a reality that escapes us. We know that we suffer, and we know nothing else. This is the base on which man has built everything. Yes, it is on the parched granite of pain that man has firmly established love and courage, heroism and pity, the choir of august laws and the procession of terrible or delightful virtues. If that foundation failed them, those noble figures would all crash together into the abyss of nothingness. Humanity has an obscure consciousness of the necessity of pain. It has placed pious sorrow among the virtues of the saints. Blessed are those that suffer, and woe to the fortunate! Because it uttered that cry the Gospel has reigned over the world for two thousand years.[1]

¶ Do you remember a picture at Milan in which there is a little cherub trying to feel one of the points of the crown of thorns with his little first finger? It seemed to me a true thought.[2]

[1] Anatole France, *On Life and Letters*, 294.

[2] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 3.

(2) *The Opposition of the World.* Part of Christ's sufferings sprang from the contact of the sinless Son of Man with a sinful world, and the apparently vain attempt to influence and leaven that sinful world with care for itself and love for the Father. If there had been nothing more than that, yet Christ's sufferings as the Son of God in the midst of sinful men would have been deep and real. "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" was wrung from Him by the painful sense of want of sympathy between His aims and theirs. "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then I would fly away and be at rest," must often be the language of those who are like Him in spirit, and in consequent sufferings.

¶ If we are living in oneness of spirit with our Lord, the same thing will sadden us that saddened Him—the world's unbelief and sin, its cold contempt of God, its hard rebellion against His law, its proud rejection of His love. To share in His mission to the world will inevitably make us sharers in His trials and sufferings as we carry it on. We shall need to bear reproach as He did, to be evil-spoken-of as He was, to be shunned and stigmatized for the same faithfulness to God that drew down on Him the enmity of men. The more perfectly we resemble Him, the more of this we shall have to endure; indeed, the measure in which we suffer it will often be an accurate measurement of the extent of our resemblance to our Lord.[1]

(3) *Pity.* Christ went out into the world in the spirit of sympathy with, and compassion for, the common weaknesses and infirmities and sins of men. We can share in the suffering which His pity brought Him. "Hide not thyself from thine own flesh." We may clutch at the advantage of our worldly position to screen ourselves as much as ever we can from fellowship in the pains which the great mass of men have to share. "Hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Have some contact with the suffering, and not in a general and vague philanthropy merely, but a real, actual sympathy with some suffering men or women. Have your own burden well in hand, well borne, so that you can lay open the spaces of your heart, and give some of your vacant time really to bear the burdens of others. There are some weaker than you in your office or round about you in your society, some poorer than you, some struggling with great difficulties or great temptations.

[1] G. H. Knight.

Be at pains with a manly and intelligent sympathy to understand their difficulties, so that as you are walking on you may feel that you have been able to tide over the rough waters of this life some one or other whose case you really know; that you have been able to help through the moral difficulties and temptations all around some one whom you are drawing with you nearer to God.[1]

(4) *Sin.* One part of the sufferings of Christ is to be found in that deep and mysterious fact on which one durst not venture to speak beyond what the actual words of Scripture put into one's lips—the fact that Christ wrought out His perfect obedience as a man, through temptation. There was no sin *within* Him, no tendency to sin, no yielding to the evil that assailed. "The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." But yet, when that dark Power stood by His side, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down," it was a real temptation, and not a sham one. There was no wish to do it, no faltering for a moment, no hesitation. There was no rising up in that calm will of even a moment's impulse to do the thing that was presented;—but yet it was presented, and when Christ triumphed, and the Tempter departed for a season, there had been a temptation and there had been a conflict. And though obedience be a joy, and the doing of His Father's will was His delight, as it must needs be in pure and purified hearts; yet obedience which is sustained in the face of temptation, and which never fails, though its path lead to bodily pains and the "contradiction of sinners," may well be called suffering.

4. Now there is one very comforting fact which we must take into account in all our thought of this mysterious subject. If we participate in the sufferings of Christ, if His death is reproduced and perpetuated, as it were, in our daily mortifying ourselves in the present evil world, *Christ is with us in our afflictions.* We need not hold that there is no reference here to that comforting thought, "In all our affliction he is afflicted."

¶ They tell us that in some trackless lands, when one friend passes through the pathless forests, he breaks a twig ever and anon as he goes, that those who come after may see the traces of his having been there, and may know that they are not out of the road. And when we are journeying through the murky night,

[1] Bishop Gore.

and the dark woods of affliction and sorrow, it is something to find here and there a spray broken, or a leafy stem bent down with the tread of His foot and the brush of His hand as He passed, and to remember that the path He trod He has hallowed, and thus to find lingering fragrances and hidden strengths in the remembrance of Him as "in all points tempted like as we are," bearing grief *for* us, bearing grief *with* us, bearing grief *like* us.[1]

5. We must not keep this thought of Christ's companionship in sorrow for the larger trials of life. If the mote in the eye be large enough to annoy us, it is large enough to bring out His sympathy; and if the grief be too small for Him to compassionate and share, it is too small for us to be troubled by it. Let us never fear to be irreverent or too familiar in the thought that Christ is willing to hear, and help us to bear, the pettiest, the minutest, and most insignificant of the daily annoyances that may come to ruffle us. Whether it be poison from one serpent sting, or whether it be poison from a million of buzzing tiny mosquitoes, if we go to Him He will help us to endure it. He will do more, He will bear it with us; for if so be that we suffer with Him, He suffers with us, and our oneness with Christ brings about a community of possessions whereby it becomes true of each trusting soul in its relations to Him, that "all mine (joys and sorrows alike) are thine, and all thine are mine."

I could have sung as sweet as any lark
  Who in unfettered skies doth find him blest,
And sings to leaning angels prayer and praise,
  For in God's garden the most lowly nest.

But came the cares—a grey and stinging throng
  Of Lilliputian foes, whose thrust and dart
Did blind my eyes and hush my song in tears;
  Their brushing wings flung poison to my heart.

I could have fought, in truth, a goodly fight,
  Braved death, nor feared defeat before one foe;
Against these puny cares I strive in vain,
  They sting my soul unto its overthrow.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Dora Sigerson Shorter.

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